

Glad Tidings

January/February 2018





24 The Twice-Promised Land of Palestine

by Dorcas and Noel Gordon

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Glad Tidings

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I love reading stories of faith. I love to read how God is working in the lives of other women. I love to hear of their challenges and their triumphs; their stories strengthen and challenge me in my own faith. In this edition of *Glad Tidings*, you will read the stories of four different faithful women. I love that they range in age from their 20s to their 80s. I thank God for what we can learn from these women of faith.

This is a great time of year to read stories of faith because a new year is a great time to also think about your own life. I recently began to do this because

of the devotional Lisbeth Duncan led at our Executive Council meeting. She encouraged us to be delighted in each new day. Her excitement for each new day, and the belief that something good is going to happen each day really inspired me. Sometimes, the excitement of the morning is not a good excitement, but more of a panic as I jump out of bed to make lunches, be certain the kids are getting ready for school, and think about work deadlines.

As I approach this new year, I wonder how it might be different if I delight in every new day in 2018. What if I wake with a new excitement? How would it change my day, my month, and my year if I awake to the words of the psalmist,

This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24 (NRSV)

Too many days I wake with stress, but maybe I can change this. If I remember that each day is a gift from God, a day to rejoice in, this should change. With a new optimistic awakening, I think, perhaps, the rest of the day will be different. Perhaps, I will be more thankful for the little, and the big things, and grumble a little less. Perhaps, I will take a few more moments connecting with those in my life. Perhaps I will worry less about what I accomplish in a day, and more about what God is doing through me each day.

Then, when I do endure a bad day, or things do not go as planned, perhaps, just perhaps, I will be able to look past the negative and actually rejoice and be glad. Thanks be to God.

Sharing the Faith

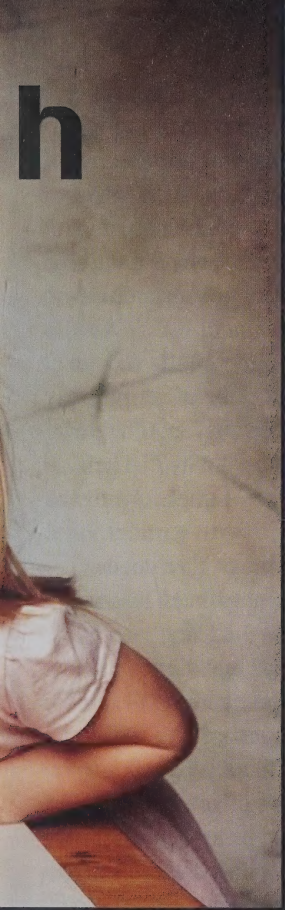


by Bethany McCaffrey

“Mommy, what does ‘redeemed’ mean? the little voice asked from the back of the car. We were on our way to preschool and our then, one- and three-year-old daughters and I were rocking out to a WOW Worship CD. That question (and the follow-up concerns on whether her preschool classmates were redeemed or not...) was the moment I realized that, seminary or not, raising our children and sharing our faith with them was going to be more complicated than

I had anticipated. Now the girls are three and five. As you might imagine, the questions have multiplied, exponentially.

I say that sharing faith with our children is more complicated than I had anticipated instead of saying that it is difficult because it isn’t always difficult. It isn’t always easy either. It is often stretching and occasionally frustrating but it can also be a joy- and wonder-filled honour, as well as a great responsibility.



Like all things in parenting, there are moments that make us laugh out loud—like the time our youngest (on her third birthday) told the build-a-bear lady that “now (her) bear can have Jesus inside him!” as they were tucking the little plastic heart inside—and times that make us wonder ‘how do

we get out of this?’—like the time my oldest (also at age 3) realized that extemporaneous prayer was an excellent way to prolong bedtime (I never anticipated explaining the concept of silent, private prayer to a preschooler).

I’ll never forget the first time I caught myself saying: “don’t make me make a rule” (a favourite phrase of my mother’s) to my own children. It was nearly as surprising as hearing my eldest say: “that’s not

appropriate!” (my own words) to her sister. They pick up on everything.

In theory, this tendency to mimic should make it very easy for us to pass on our faith. With both my husband and I being clergy, the whole going-to-church on Sunday thing is kind of a given. But Sunday is only one or two hours out of their week but for large portions of the rest of their week, church is the thing that takes mommy and daddy out of the house for large portions of time, just like any other vocation. On Sundays though, we don’t worship with our children, (except on the elusive Sunday off). Instead, our girls sit with members of my congregation who have, since our arrival, lovingly welcomed them into the worshiping community. Our family is immensely blessed by others who are willing to take on the task of helping our children learn to worship.

I didn’t realize, until my second maternity leave, just how much work is involved in bringing children to worship. It is hard work. Sometimes, after struggling to hang on to a toddler who just wants to see what’s going on (but doesn’t yet understand the concept of a whisper) and keeping a fussy baby quiet-ish, I’d wonder if it was worth the effort. In all of the business and fussing, and moving, and shhh-ing, and missing half of the service for one reason or another, what could they possibly be getting out of it? What was I getting out of it? Parents, grandparents, or anyone

who faithfully bring children to worship are doing such important, and sometimes exhausting, work in terms of passing on faith and helping their children form relationships with a worshiping community. They need all of the support, encouragement, and prayer we can offer them. Maternity leave worship with a newborn and a two-year-old taught me that sharing faith isn't always glamorous or easy, but that doesn't make it any less important.

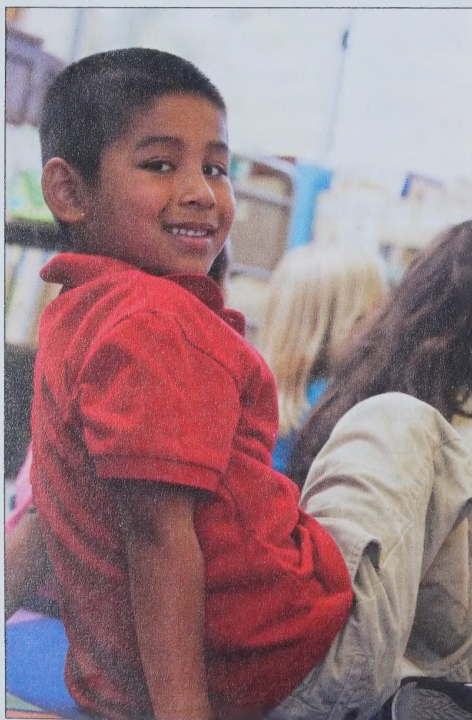
I have been surprised to discover that, more than anything, sharing my faith with my children has involved a lot of self-reflection. What are they seeing? What are they hearing? What

am I doing? These aren't Sunday questions. These are everyday questions. So many daily decisions are second nature to me. It wasn't until my kids mastered the use of that wonderful word, "why?" that I realized how much goes unsaid, how much goes unexplained.

At a certain point, "that's the way we've always done it" stops being an acceptable answer. The girls always want to know "why?" Their patient (but incessant) questions have taught me to simplify, to wonder, and to articulate things I've never really thought about or been asked to explain.

The other night, our dinner conversation took an unexpected turn with the question "so, when Jesus prays to God, he's talking to himself?" It's clear she's been working on this little joke since Sunday School, but that she's also trying to work through exactly what that means. My husband and I just looked at each other trying to figure out just how far into Trinitarian theology we were going to have to go. Three-in-one is hard enough to explain to adults, how do you even begin to explain it to kids? In the end, we got off easy because she really just wanted us to acknowledge her clever reflection; she was unconcerned with the intricacies.

I think it is questions like this, and the definition of 'church



words' like redemption, that make so many of us nervous about sharing faith with children. Partly because it means coming to grips with the fact that we don't always know how to articulate what we believe and partly because we have somehow convinced ourselves that it's too much for them to handle. Truthfully, they often handle it better than many adults do. In their questioning, they have taught us how to listen, and to figure out what and why it is they are asking in order to answer them honestly.

Sometimes, at the end of the long day I kiss them good night and close their bedroom door and wonder how many opportunities I missed during the day. Did I listen? Did I live my faith or did I slip into crisis management mode. Do they feel like my work got more of my time, attention, and care than they did? There is no manual for this. The promises that we made on their baptism days are big, and sometimes daunting.

Committing to make faith a priority in our family life isn't always easy (even for clergy). One Sunday last year, I was off but my husband wasn't. 9 a.m. rolled around and I was enjoying my first Sunday morning in pyjamas in at least 12 months. The girls appeared at my bedroom door wearing identical incredulous looks: 'what do you mean we AREN'T going to church?' Needless to say, we got dressed and out the door—we

weren't on time, but we were there. It wasn't an easy Sunday, but we were there.

The greatest thing I have discovered so far on this adventure of parenting is that there is comfort in community. One of the most amazing things about raising our children in the church is that it gives us all a community of support. We aren't doing this alone. The baptismal promises belong to the whole church, not just the parents. There are grandparents who have seen this all before and there are people who DID get a full night's sleep and are happy to entertain them for a bit. Our girls have friends who can sing along to their favourite hymns (again, and again, and again), friends who share their interests in cartoons, games, and Disney characters, but they also have trusted adults who will listen to them, encourage them, pray for them, and even dance with them in the church hallways. For all of these people who join us in sharing the love of Jesus with our children, we give thanks.

Bethany McCaffrey is Minister at Melville Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, wife of an Anglican Priest, and mother to two inquisitive girls ages three and five. When not at the church or waiting for the school bus, she may be found reading or enjoying time out of the city, preferably somewhere on a lake or with horses.

WHAT HAPPENS

by Mary Helen Garvin



AFTER 80?

I always thought I would live till 80 and then I would be gone. Now I am 80 and I have no plan for what comes next! My parents both lived into their 90s and I have at least one grandparent, a couple of generations back, who lived beyond 101.

My birthday, along with visits to a nursing home to see an aunt in her late 90s (who longed to be gone from this world) and our government's struggle to come up with a reasonable law about physician-assisted dying, has caused me to begin making plans for the "beyond eighty" years. One must always consider the context of any project before making plans. So, what are the issues that go with being 80 years old in this era when, if we make it past 70, we could be around for a good many years to come?

I realize that there are no assurances about how many years are left for me. But that is no different than it has ever been. As the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, "there is a time to be born and a time to die." (Ecclesiastes 3:2) He reminds us "moreover, God has put a sense of past and future into their (meaning us) minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." (Ecclesiastes 3:2) So, I remind myself that I have never known and will never know the number of my days. When we first went to Taiwan as missionaries, one of our senior colleagues, part of a group who had lost everything but their lives in China, gave me a piece of advice, "Live here as if you will be here forever, and keep a suitcase packed under the bed in case you have to leave tonight."¹ I believe this is good advice for all of us. So, my first plan for after 80 is to live as if I

will be here forever, and be ready to go, this time without a suitcase, at any minute. We humans always live in this tension, but as Christians we can live in it with joyful hearts, knowing that the next departure is for eternity in the presence of the God who has loved us through all our days.

Other issues for my consideration as I plan include my waning energy and strength. Oh, how ticked off I get when I can't take the lid off a new bottle of pickles, or lift the watering can in the garden without pain! I can no longer rearrange the furniture in my house by myself. If I sit down in my recliner to rest or watch TV, I am just as likely an hour later to discover that I had fallen asleep and the TV is blaring out a program I would never watch if I was in my right mind! So, the next plan must include swallowing my pride, asking for help with things that need to be done, and recognizing that I need to rest occasionally without giving myself grief or calling myself lazy. Author Lyndsay Green says, "to keep your dignity, you must give up your pride."² A tough task, but necessary! So, my plan must include learning to ask for help gracefully.

Experiencing frailty to whatever degree reminds me that if I want to be active, I had better stay active! Once we reach 80, we all have differing capacities for activity. Having been a farm-girl and a nurse as well as the mother of five kids, I have always

been a walker. Now, walking is a bit more difficult. But I've discovered that a pair of walking poles not only strengthens core muscles, but also eases the pressure on an arthritic spine. I have found a new way to keep walking and thus keep this old body (my mind is young; it's my body that is wearing out!) going. It's a bit like my sister's old Volkswagen that is still being driven from Nova Scotia to Ontario with over 400,000 km on the mileage gauge. The secret is in good servicing. So the third part of my plan is to keep walking, keep going to the exercise group, and keep LAUGHING.

Another issue I have: I am single and an introvert. I could easily sequester myself in my apartment with books, my computer, and the TV. Loneliness can set in and loneliness is soul destroying. So, I will promise myself to be "given to hospitality" even if all I can offer is a cup of tea. I will walk my granddaughter's friendly golden Retriever so that I can get to know my new neighbours. I will keep going to church even if it means I must ask for someone to drive me there (horrors!). I will find ways to be useful, looking beyond myself to the world around me. I believe it was the theologian Karl Barth who said that we should always read scripture with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. It is an awesome privilege to be able to pray for the world. Surrounded

by a loving family, I will hug my kids and grandkids and cuddle my great grandchildren with a heart filled with thankfulness. I will look for every opportunity for laughter that I can find. I will remind myself that everyone who reaches 80 does not have the family, or the health of mind and body that I have, and that will move me to pray for them. When there is no one else to whom I can relate at any given moment, God is always there and I believe I am never a distraction to God. So part four of my plan is to keep connected and as my Malawi friends say, "stay blessed."

Because I have recently moved into a new home, I have had reason to throw out a lot of things. Cleaning out filing cabinets that held much of my life's work has made me mournful as I come to terms with the fact that the working part of my life is over. For me, and many others I know, our life's work has been a big part of our identity. I thought that I had dealt with the grief that comes with leaving work behind when I retired. But in the years between 67 and 80, I found many ways to keep using the skills I had used to make my living through volunteering. To arrive at the time when even active volunteering is being diminished has brought sorrow in a new way.

Mourning is always a part of any transition and must always be experienced if we are to move on to the new circumstances of our

lives. Moving into 80 calls for recognition that there is a sadness associated with the adventure of growing older. But it is a sadness mixed with some pleasure. I recall a summer as a young woman when I worked at the local hospital. Sometimes after working the evening nursing shift, a few of us would drive down to the lake shore, shed our uniforms and go skinny dipping on late moon-lit evenings under starry skies. I am reminded of that now as I think about the process of shedding our work lives. In those days, our uniforms were more confining and less comfortable than what nurses wear now. Slipping out of them was letting the experience of the hospital that day slide away. Slipping into the pleasure of the cool water on tired bodies brought a relaxation and refreshment that felt almost sacred. I think letting go of our working identities is a similar experience. So part five of the plan is to learn to relax and be refreshed as I am surrounded by the love of God, soaking up God's goodness and moving into the evening of my life.

¹ Margaret Copeland

² You Could Live a Long Time: Are You Ready? p.65

³ copyright: Mary Helen Garvin



Some years ago, I wrote a poem.

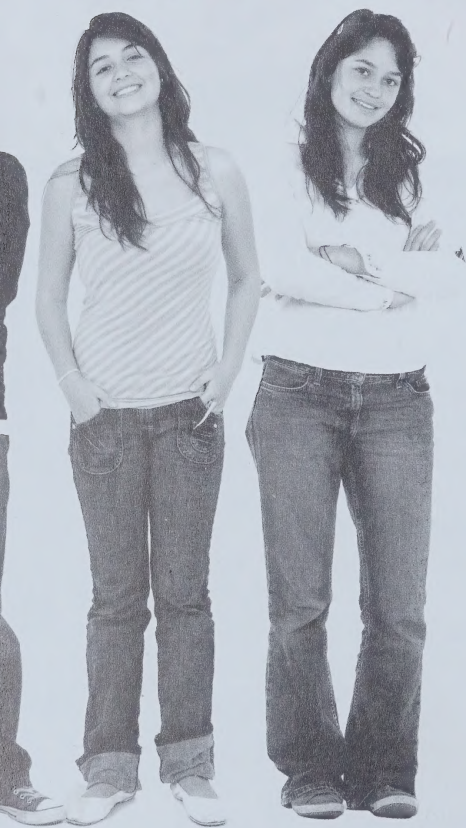
Holding Life Loosely

I hold this life loosely, Lord,
For what it is worth
With all its temporality.
A gift from you,
Not to be fondled
Or secreted away
In miserly fashion.
Rather, a gift to be used with
abandon,
Spent to the limit,
Enjoyed to the uttermost
Poured out upon the earth

I hold this life loosely, Lord,
See it superseded,
Overshadowed by Infinite Life.
Your life in me,
To be sought after,
To die for,
No cost too great.
Your life, perfect, eternal,
incorruptible,
Flaunting its beauty,
Seductive and hopeful,
Giving my life meaning.³

**Nothing has changed. I've just
turned eighty!**

LOVING Ourselves



by Erin Huston

From the very beginning of our time on earth, it has been a Godly thing to love ourselves. When Adam and Eve were created, they never felt bad about themselves, or about their bodies. Before the fruit was eaten, they felt no shame. To feel self-consciousness and ashamed of oneself

is not a godly thing. It is an incredibly earthly thing. It is the voices of our peers, our parents, and our culture. It is not a helpful trait, it is not selfless, and in fact, I think it takes us farther away from God, and from each other.

For me, loving myself has never come easily. At the age of 15, my mental health and body image took a turn. I began to restrict my food intake and lose significant weight. I began working out more than I should have and by April of that year after a long day of blood tests, fainting, surveys, interviews with myself and my parents. I was diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa at the Victoria Children's Hospital in London. To say that my faith was pushed to the back of my mind at this point is an understatement. Recovery was hard and I hated involving others in it. I wanted to do that myself and in my head that included without God.

By the time summer came around, I was weight restored and, by some miracle, my social worker and parents allowed me to return to a place that I desperately needed but didn't know that I needed just yet. I was able to return to a camp I had worked at previously and spent most of my summers as a child. It was this that really changed things for me, and I felt that everything was starting

to connect in my mind. I knew that this is where I was meant to be at this time and where I was safest. I was re-acquainted with the friends I had worked with in the past, and my camp family grew as I got more and more comfortable at camp with the community that it is building.

It was this—it was finding this community, this safe space that gave me the courage to even consider not just tolerating myself, but actually loving myself. It was camp that taught me that God puts you where He needs you to be, that He guides you to the safest place for you, even if the safest place seems scary. It was camp, and the people there, that taught me that I can tell funny jokes, that I can work really hard, and that I can be healthy and strong at the same time. Camp didn't teach me to love myself, but it gave me the tools and the courage to be able to teach me how to love myself.

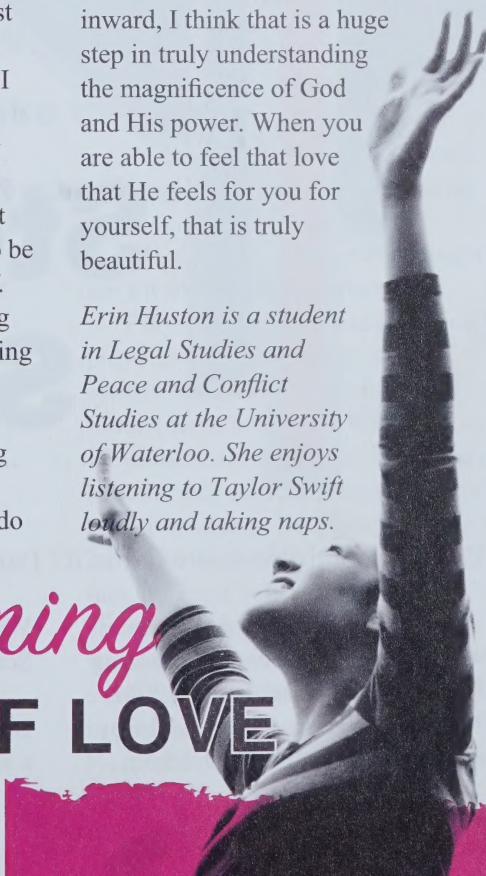
And I am learning that accepting God's love is more than just accepting God's love. It is taking that love inward and in that love, learning to accept ourselves. It means forgiving yourself, being kind to yourself, taking care of yourself, just as you do

for others, just as God does for you. I have learned that our lives are not about looking for love, but looking to find all the barriers that have been built in ourselves that block the love for ourselves and for God.

Scripture tells us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves not only to tell us to love others, but as a reminder to love ourselves. It remind us that we also deserve the forgiveness and unconditional love from ourselves that God gives us. When you are able to truly accept God's love for you and apply that love inward, I think that is a huge step in truly understanding the magnificence of God and His power. When you are able to feel that love that He feels for you for yourself, that is truly beautiful.

Erin Huston is a student in Legal Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo. She enjoys listening to Taylor Swift loudly and taking naps.

Transforming POWER OF LOVE





Learning

Step by Step

by Susan Currie

Parish Social Work—what is it? I am still learning step by step.

Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM) began to define the meaning of Parish Social Work back in 2001. That year, I made a career change by switching from an Early Childcare

Worker Level 3 to a Bachelor in Social Work degree.

In 2001, I was accepted into Booth University College, which has a strong theological base as well as a

focus on counselling courses. These courses would all provide a strong base for me in helping the inner city families, individuals, children, and youth that I work with daily. All the people live in deep poverty in the inner city of Winnipeg. Most are Indigenous people. I work hard helping them to discover hope for a better future, and the courage to follow their dreams.

The counselling and theological courses I took are a definite plus for a person in this kind of position, but you need even more than that; I needed a strong personal faith in God that gave me an unconditional acceptance and love for all the people I came in contact with. I also needed a strong support system for myself.

It hasn't always been a smooth road; being a white woman working within a church mission with mostly Aboriginal peoples has stirred a lot of unresolved anger with many Aboriginal peoples. I have had my car stolen, my house broken into, and my life threatened. My words and intentions have been misunderstood many times. My salary nowhere near meets the responsibilities I carry working in a not-for-profit organization. I have wanted to leave

but found out that I can't.

God showed me that my work at WICM is more than a job—it is a calling. If you haven't tried before, it is difficult to turn your back on a calling. God promises that if I continuously seek God first and keep my focus on Him that He will help me to fulfill this calling. And I do. There are many celebrations over small progress made in a person or a family's life. We celebrate over

kids staying in school and passing their grade; over adults graduating from Grade 12 and going on into trades, college, or university; over babies being born and families being reunited; over someone landing a

job for the first time in their life.

Praying for others and specifically praying out loud for others has always been a challenge for me. Since I have been with WICM (now 17 years in various capacities), I have become a consistent presence to the people we serve. People know who I am and that I work for the church; they may not believe in going to church but they know who to call when they are in trouble. One day a call came in from one of our drop in persons, who was "in trouble." He, and a room full of other family

**God is more than
willing to work if
we take the first
step in obedience.**

members were drinking, unable to cope with the back-to-back deaths of two family members.

Pete (not his real name) suggested they call "Rev Margaret's place." "Someone will pray for us," he told them. So he got me on the phone. We talked about what had happened to his family and about other ways on how to handle the pain besides drinking. "Pray for us," he asked. I said I would and that I would also tell Rev. Margaret to pray as well. I thought he was ready to hang up when he said firmly, "pray now" and then to the

others where he was, he said, "listen up, she's going to pray. I just put her on speaker phone. Hey, take your hats off." So I prayed over a speaker phone with a room full of drinking and hurting people who needed to hear that someone cared about them enough to pray—right then.

God is more than willing to work if we take the first step in obedience. Step by sometimes painful step, loving, embracing, praying for, encouraging, and empowering people from birth to death. That is what this Parish Social Worker does.

Circulation News

Thank you to all of you for your renewals and new subscriptions to *Glad Tidings*. As I write this, I am still busy updating and adding to the lists. Please check your address label this month to ensure your address is correct, especially if there were changes.

A few reminders:

- If you have not renewed yet, it is not too late.
- We do begin new subscriptions at any point during the year. Just phone or email for more information.
- Gift subscriptions are one of the best ways to increase our *Glad Tidings* subscription numbers. Consider giving a gift subscription to a friend today!

All the best for 2018 and I hope you continue to enjoy *Glad Tidings*!



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Chocolate and Ashes

by Laura Alary



Lent will be launched in an unusual way this year. As happens every now and then, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day. There is something wonderfully absurd about this timing: a celebration of passion and sensual pleasure to kick off a season defined by renunciation and the taming of desire.

Lately I have been amusing myself
by composing cards for the occasion:

*Roses are red,
Ashes are grey.
I'm giving up chocolate.
It's better that way.*

Or perhaps:

*My heart burns for you,
you cute little elf.
But I must resist,
or make an ash of myself.*

But maybe my laughter is
misplaced. Perhaps this apparent
collision of opposites points to
something less frivolous.

The last time Ash Wednesday
and Valentine's Day coincided, I
puzzled over how to connect them in
a way that would make sense to my
young children. Finally I bought some
wooden hearts, sand paper, and food
dye, and created a simple ritual. We
read aloud a passage from Ezekiel
(36:26) where God's people are
promised new hearts and new spirits.
We talked about ways we would
like to feel new; things we had done
for which we were sorry; things we
hoped to change. Then we spent some
time working on our wooden hearts:
sanding the rough edges; tinting them
a vivid crimson; polishing them with
a homemade concoction of beeswax
and olive oil. As we tended to our
hearts, we imagined our own hearts
being mended, smoothed, cleaned,
and made new.

To be honest, I have no idea what
my kids took from this exercise. But

for me it was one small step toward
finding a new perspective on Lent.

My own experience of this season
always emphasized self-denial,
sacrifice, and death. As a child, I was
terrified by the summons to let go of
my life—my very self that was just
beginning to form. If following Jesus
meant the loss of everything I was and
hoped to become, I wanted no part of
it.

When I had children of my own, I
was determined to find a way to help
them see Lent more positively, as a
time of renewal and transformation.
But I kept stumbling over the
language and imagery of laying down
one's life. Then a flash of insight
came.

I had been reading *Praying in
Color* by Sybil MacBeth and was
intrigued by her practice of holy
doodling. I decided to try it at home.
One February evening my children
and I gathered around the table by
candlelight to draw our prayers. At
first there was a restless flood of
questions: "Mommy, why are we
doing this?" "How do I start?" "Can
I paint instead?" But eventually a
stillness fell over our little group and
fascinating images began to emerge:
tangerine bubbles for an aunt who
was always cheered by the colour
orange; green vines for a grandmother
who needed glimpses of new growth
in her life; and for a friend dying of
a neurological disease, starbursts of
yellow crayon drenched with deep

purple watercolors. As we wordlessly held these people in our hearts, we pictured them also held in the heart of God.

Later that evening, as I contemplated what had taken place around the table, I was struck by how the children had naturally settled into silence and become absorbed in their prayers. I loved how their hearts and minds opened up as their awareness of God and others expanded. They had lost themselves in the best possible sense.

Then it hit me. Maybe losing yourself is not about death, but love.

When my first child was born, I struggled with the feeling of being pushed out of the centre of my own life. Suddenly my needs—for sleep, for leisure, for time to think—were shoved to the periphery while this new little person wailed and squawked his endless demands. Sometimes I felt like the person I had been was vanishing. And yet, I loved my child in a way I had not known was possible. Sometimes, as we cuddled skin-to-skin in the dark during nighttime feedings, I had the odd sensation that I did not know where his tiny body ended and mine began.

All forms of love—friendship, romance, humanitarianism, the love that binds parent to child—have the capacity to draw us out of ourselves. True love frees us from the tight orbit of self-absorption and catapults us into a spacious place where there is no longer me and you, and us and them, but only we.

In the words of the Persian poet, Rumi:

*Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing
and right-doing,
there is a field.
I'll meet you there.*

*When the soul lies down in that
grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase
each other
doesn't make any sense.*

But such love is not painless.

A few months ago a friend shared with me a young adult novel called *Stargirl*. The main character is a non-conformist in the best sense of the word. She plays the ukulele in the cafeteria for anyone who will listen. She attends funerals for complete strangers and grieves wholeheartedly. She writes cards and delivers gifts anonymously. At basketball games,

"It is love that transforms, heals, cleanses, restores, renews, reconciles, forgives, and binds together. Love gives meaning to that which otherwise seems meaningless."

she cheers for both teams. Stargirl moves through the world—including the socially stratified world of Mica High School—as if all the cliques and divisions simply do not exist. She feels a sense of kinship to everyone and everything.

The book made me cry. I cried at the sheer beauty of Stargirl—her boundless kindness and ability to see the oneness of things. But I also cried because this way of seeing and the love that flows from it threatens those whose sense of security and self-definition demands that there be an us and them, insiders and outsiders. In the end, Stargirl is misunderstood, despised, and rejected.

Sound familiar?

Jesus does not lay down his life because suffering is a good thing, or because he seeks death and self-destruction as ends in themselves. Rather, he suffers as a consequence of his life of radical love, a love that baffles, threatens, and offends. The death of Jesus is not an isolated event. It is the culmination of an entire life of making room, welcoming the stranger, crossing boundaries, and loving wholeheartedly.

In one sense, my childhood impression of Lent was true. Jesus does call us to follow him, and the places he leads us are not always where we would choose to end up.

Sometimes love hurts. A lot. There are few things as risky as opening yourself up to misunderstanding or

rejection or loss. This kind of vulnerability scares me to my core. But I keep choosing it because deep down I believe that love is the most real thing there

is. It is love that transforms, heals, cleanses, restores, renews, reconciles, forgives, and binds together. Love gives meaning to that which otherwise seems meaningless. Love drags us beyond our egos and makes us better versions of ourselves.

Maybe it is not so strange after all that Lent will begin on Valentine's Day. It's actually a perfect reminder that the pulsing heart of this season is not smug self-denial or rigid asceticism. It is *love*: the divine love that animated the life and ministry of Jesus; the universal love that forms the rich soil from which our particular loves grow; the transforming love that takes our hearts, no matter how shriveled, rough, or broken, and gently makes them new.

So this year as I set off on my forty day journey through the wilderness, I think I will begin by fortifying myself with a really good box of chocolates. That seems like a loving gesture. Besides, something tells me I'm going to need my strength.





Choosing a 2018 Theme Verse

By Colleen Wood

If you have been out shopping in a stationary or craft store lately, you may have been surprised by the selection and options of day timers that are now available. They come in a variety of colours and themes and their covers inspire with words like Hello Happiness, Carpe Diem, or Make Great Things Happens. They also come with numerous accessories such as special pens, pockets, stickers, tapes, and you can even add in special booklets such as address books, to do lists, and even financial and fitness charts. They look like they could inspire you to change your life and then the world!

I gave into this craze and bought a fairly simple one when they were on sale last year. I will admit it got limited use as I tend to use my calendar on my phone more than anything. Although I bought a small day timer, it was still too big for me to carry around all the time. Yet, now it is a new year, and don't we all want to become new for this year? As I was being tempted by a fancy new 2018 day timer, I thought more about what might help me the most in 2018. It needed to be something inspirational, something that I could carry around, and something that could keep me calm and relaxed in the midst of chaos.

So, I decided I need to choose scripture verse for the year. I needed a verse that could speak to both my head and my heart for the year. I needed a verse that could offer me support, comfort, and hope. But, I wasn't sure how to do this. I needed a verse that would be simple to memorize so that it would be with me wherever or whenever I needed it.

Being a process person, I needed to go about some steps for choosing my verse. For me, my

first step was to look back. I wanted to reflect on 2017. I began with a few minutes of silence to settle myself, and then I prayed to God asking for His presence in the process. Then, with some paper and markers I marked down some of the events of 2017, some of the highlights, and some of the challenges. Finally, I made a box and wrote in here about my faith. This was likely the hardest part because I know I have been neglecting my faith recently. When I get emotionally tired, I am sometimes scared to be emotionally vulnerable before God. I know God's unconditional love, but sometimes adding even positive emotions to my life seems overwhelming when I am constantly surrounded by the emotion of two children. This was all I did during my first session in choosing my verse.

The second time I sat down, I wanted to think about the year before me. Surprisingly, 2018 is already looking like a busy year. I am going to Haiti for work and I am also part of the planning team for the Regional Women's Gathering in British Columbia. Our family is talking about an overseas trip to visit relatives. Both kids have busy hockey schedules that don't end until mid-April. I know I need to start exercising again after a month or two off due to an injury and illness. I have been helping and hope to continue to help with the junior youth ministry at our church. My

in-laws will also be celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary and we will be hosting. And, don't even get me started about the state of our house.

After looking at the year ahead, I started to feel overwhelmed. So, instead of feeling overwhelmed, I started to write a few good things about everything on that list. For example, when I run, I feel more energetic. Finally, I put a star over those things where I most needed God in 2018.

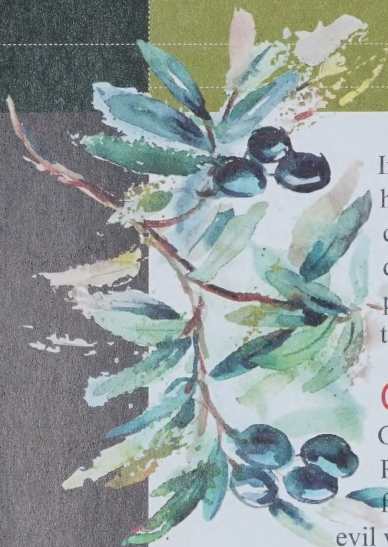
Finally, I brainstormed some of the things I want to work on next year. I used to be a very organized person, but as my schedule has filled up, I haven't taken the time to be as organized as I need to be. This is something I want to improve in 2018. I also want to spend less time on my tablet and phone, and more time reading.

As I reflected on all these lists, I looked for patterns and key words. I looked up a few verses in my concordance. The ones that I really seemed to relate to, I wrote down. Over the next week, I will take those verses and read the surrounding passages. I will take time to pray and consider the verse that will be my guiding verse for 2018. Then, I will memorize it, and I trust it will bring me hope and support throughout the year. I might even post it, maybe make it the cover for my new day timer, not that I have bought one yet!

Have you ever chosen a verse for the year? Would you consider it for 2018?

The Twice-Promise

by Dorcas and Noel Gordon



In Study 1, we presented an introduction to the history of the land of Palestine. This study will continue that introduction by going into greater detail about the events from 1918 through to the present. It may be helpful to have in front of you the timeline set out in Study 1.

Opening Prayer:

God of peace and opportunity, our Creator and Redeemer, we come to you to pray for your mercy, forgiveness, and a new start. Instead of overcoming evil with good, we have stood by while goodness has been affronted. We ask for your help to give peace a new chance to thrive in our world. Amen. (Excerpt from the Prayer of the 9th International Conference of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre.¹)

Scripture:

Read Genesis 12:1–9; 17:1–8; 21:8–21; 25:7–10

Genesis chapters 12 through 25, contains a lengthy family saga at the end of which Isaac is blessed and Ishmael exits the story of the Hebrew people. What, however, we often fail to notice is the blessing God gives to all of Abraham's offspring, particularly Ishmael, Abraham's son through Hagar and the first-born of his eight sons (Gen.25:1–2). Genesis 21:8–21 recounts the details of this promise. It is clear from the story as it unfolds that God blessed both Ishmael and Isaac promising to make each a great nation protecting

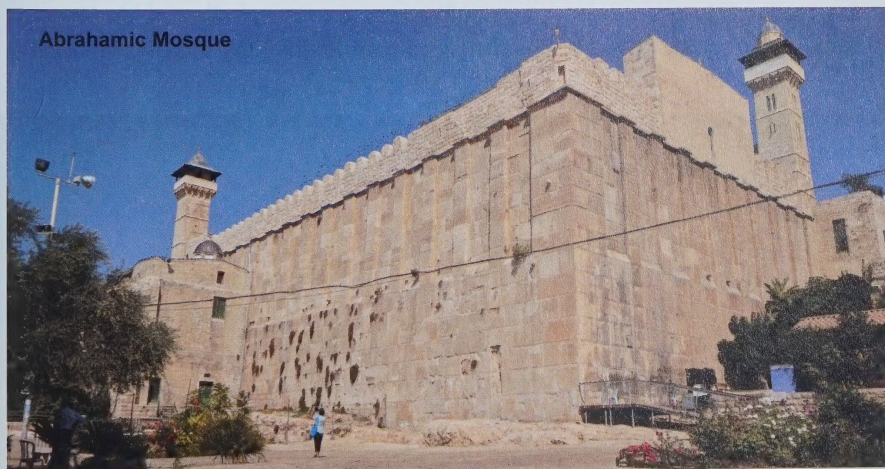
This is the second of four studies on the Land of Palestine. The first study can be found in the November/December 2017 Glad Tidings.

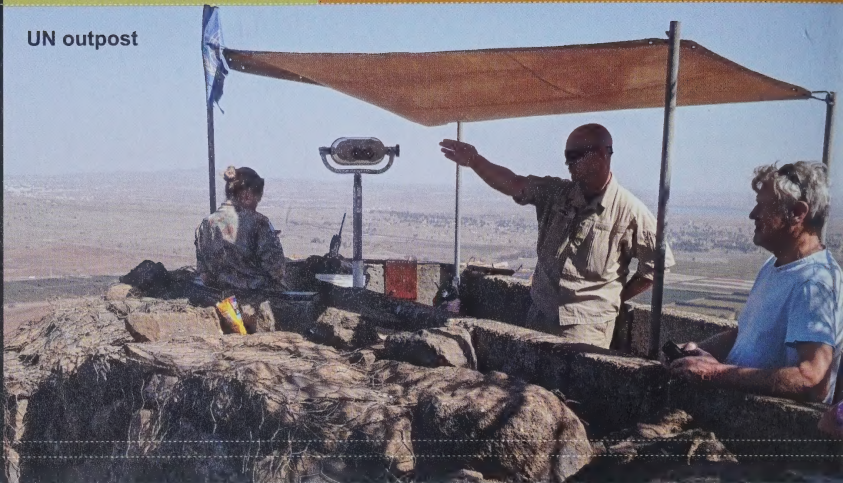
Land of PALESTINE

each one from sure and certain death. God stopped Abraham's knife from offering his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. God also provided water to Hagar and Ishmael saving them in the desert. They are brothers, sons of Abraham, members of the same family. It is from Isaac that Jews trace their lineage while the Arabs trace theirs from Ishmael. It is for this reason that Thomas Waskow, a Jewish theologian, has called Palestine the "twice promised land."²

The History of a Twice-Promised Land:

In the Versailles Treaty of 1919, Britain was given a temporary mandate for the administration of Palestine with the understanding that it would work in the best interest of its Jewish and Arab inhabitants. A 1921 census indicates that Muslims were 590,000, Christian were 89,000 and 84,000 were Jewish. "All were called 'Palestinian' and all lived together...the small Palestinian Jewish community shared the fortunes and predicaments of all Palestinians, the joys and sorrows of a generally depressed community living under the occupation of the Ottoman Turkish Empire."³ In the years after World War 1, Jewish immigration





to Palestine increased dramatically and Britain delayed making a decision to implement self-determination for Palestine.

In 1946, ownership of the land in Palestine was roughly 7% Jewish and 93% Palestinian. [Map 1] However, that changed dramatically when in 1947 the United Nations (UN) Partition Plan allocated 53% of the land to the Jewish state and 47% of the land to a Palestinian state. [Map 2]

The United Nations Partition plan was brought before the UN on 29th November 1947. The UN General Assembly resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem. A four-part document was attached, which included among other things a process for the termination of the British Mandate, and the delineation of boundaries between the two States and Jerusalem.⁴

Realizing that the promise of self-determination, given by the British as part

Understanding (IMEU) is a non-profit organization that offers journalists facts, analysis, experts, and digital resources about Palestine and Palestinians. Some additional facts from the IMEU about the Nakba:

Approximately 7.1 million : The number of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons as of 2009, including Nakba survivors and their descendants. They are located mostly in the occupied West Bank and neighboring Arab countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, denied their internationally-recognized legal right to return to their homeland by Israel, simply because they are not Jewish. Approximately 150,000 : The number of Palestinians who remained inside what became Israel's borders in 1948, many of them internally displaced. These Palestinians (sometimes called "Israeli

Photo: One of the more than 400 villages destroyed during the Nakba.

Elar Village		قرية عرار	
Date of occupation:	22/10/1948	تاريخ احتلالها:	22/10/1948
Attacked by:	Har'el and Etzioni Brigades	أحلت من قبل:	الوية هاريل وإتزيوني
Land size:	12.4 km ²	المساحة:	12356 دغم
Number of inhabitants:	510 persons	عدد السكان:	510 نسمة
SAED & V SAED Abu Zuhri Amal A' Mustakbal Center			

of the war effort against the Ottomans, was false, the Palestinians refused to agree to the terms of the UN resolution. In the war that followed, called Nakba by the Palestinians, the Israeli military force, Hagana, but more particularly, extremist groups such as the Stern Gang and Irgun wracked havoc on Palestinian villages. Massacres of whole villages took place.

“The Palestinian “Nakba” (“catastrophe” in Arabic) refers to the mass expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from British Mandate Palestine during Israel’s creation (1947–49).

The Nakba was not an unintended result of war. It was a deliberate and systematic act necessary for the creation of a Jewish majority state in historic Palestine, which was overwhelmingly Arab prior to 1948. Internally, Zionist Jewish leaders used the euphemism “transfer” when discussing plans for what today would be called ethnic cleansing.”⁵

Ilan Pappé, an Israeli historian and Senior Lecturer at the University of Haifa,

Arabs”) were granted Israeli citizenship but stripped of most of their land and placed under martial law until 1966. Today, there are approximately 1.6 million Palestinian citizens of Israel, who live as second-class citizens in their own homeland, subject to more than 50 laws that discriminate against them because they are not Jewish. More than 400 : The number of Palestinian cities and towns systematically destroyed by Israeli forces or repopulated with Jews between 1948 and 1950. Approximately 4,244,776 : The number of acres of Palestinian land expropriated by Israel during and immediately following its creation in 1948. Between 100 and 200 billion : The total estimated monetary loss of Palestinians dispossessed during Israel’s creation, in current US dollars. (I might put these additional facts into a side bar so they don’t get lost.)⁶



Iqrit, a Christian Palestinian village destroyed by the Israel army of Christmas Eve 1948

describes Israel's 1948 Plan (Plan Dalet), with its mandate to "capture, cleanse, or destroy" Palestinian villages, as ethnic cleansing. Situating his work within a definition that emerged most recently from the events in former Yugoslavia, he describes ethnic cleansing as a well-defined policy of a particular group of persons to systematically eliminate another group from a given territory on the basis of religious, ethnic or national origin. Such a policy involves violence and is very often connected with military operations. It is to be achieved by all possible means, from discrimination to extermination, and entails violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Most ethnic cleansing methods are grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols and have been declared a crime against humanity. Pappe adds the reminder that ethnic cleansing also seeks to wipe out that groups' history.⁷

In his book Pappe recounts the taking of one village, Deir Yassin on 9th April 1948, an event which the Palestinians remember as the first strike in the Nakba and the systematic attempt to remove them from the land:

Deir Yassin, a pastoral and cordial village that had reached a non-aggression pact with the Hagana in Jerusalem, but was doomed to be wiped out because it was within the areas designated in Plan Dalet to be cleansed. Because of the prior agreement they had signed with the village, the Hagana decided to send the Irgun and

Stern Gang troops, so as to absolve themselves from any official accountability....

As they burst into the village, the Jewish soldiers sprayed the houses with machine-gun fire, killing many of the inhabitants. The remaining villagers were then gathered in one place and murdered in cold blood, their bodies abused while a number of women were raped and then killed.⁸

When the Nakba ended, the State of Israel, in a Declaration of Independence, had come into existence. It held approximately 78% of the land of Palestine. [Map 3] Travelling through northern Galilee one sees planted forests of beautiful pine trees, which upon closer inspection reveal the remains of many of the destroyed Palestinian villages.

Canada's involvement in perpetuating the concealed nature of the Nakba has come to light in a park called Canada Park.¹¹ In place of three Palestinian villages, a park was created by an international Zionist organization, the Jewish National Fund [JNF], paid for with \$15 million in charitable donations from the Canadian Jewish and Christian communities. With trees planted over the hills and valleys, the fact of Arab villages in the area is almost completely obscured. According to Zochrot, an Israeli organization,¹² committed to educating Israelis and

Stern Gang – “Zionist extremist organization in Palestine, founded in 1940 by Avraham Stern (1907–42). The group's terrorist activities extended beyond Palestine: two members assassinated Lord Moyne, British minister of state in the Middle East, at Cairo (November 1944). Later the Stern Gang attacked airfields, railway yards, and other strategic [British] installations in Palestine, usually with success, though at heavy loss in members killed or captured.”⁹

Irgun: “The Irgun was led by Menachem Begin, the future Israeli prime minister, who was a leading proponent of Revisionist Zionism, the militant branch of Zionism pioneered by Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, which openly despised the Arabs and sought restoration of what it called Eretz Yisrael, the ancient land of Israel. By this was meant “both sides of the Jordan,” the Irgun slogan meaning all of Palestine and Jordan was the rightful home of the Jews.”

“The Irgun was the dominant Jewish terrorist organization, both in size and the number and frequency of its attacks. Its most spectacular feat up to this time had been the July 22, 1946 blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, with the killing of 91 people—41 Arabs, 28 British and 17 Jews.”¹⁰

Thomas Waskow, a Jewish theologian, has called Palestine the “twice promised land.”

foreign visitors, 86 Palestinian villages lie buried underneath JNF parks. A further 400 destroyed villages had their lands passed on to exclusively Jewish communities. Zochrot's several hundred activists regularly select a destroyed village, taking Palestinian refugees with them as they place a handmade sign detailing the village's name in Arabic and Hebrew. Within days, the signs are removed.¹³

Israel's Declaration of Independence, dated 14th May, 1948, one day before the British Mandate ended, concluded in this way: “We call upon the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to join forces with us in immigration and construction and to be at our right hand in the great endeavor to fulfill the age-old longing for the redemption of Israel.” This call for support from the international Jewish community was very successful. Statistics show that in 1972, such international support paid for 63 percent of Israel's health and welfare services, 21 percent of primary and secondary education, and 87 percent of higher education.¹⁴

At the time of the formation of the state of Israel, the western nations, trying to come to terms with the horrific nature of the holocaust and their silence in the face of genocide, endorsed Israel. Particularly, this has meant ongoing committed support from the government of the United States, which more recently provided funds for the 443 mile long separation wall built primarily on Palestinian lands, and funding for the militarization of Israel so that, even though one of the smallest countries, it is seventh largest military power in the world.¹⁵

After the Nakba the UN continued to try to work on a peace process by spearheading a number of initiatives, including the Lausanne conference of 1949. This proposed path to peace centred around the right of refugees to return to Palestine, and a commitment to a two-state solution with the country divided equally. All sides were in agreement, including Israel's foreign minister. However, it was vetoed by Israel's prime minister and the King of Jordan, who had a plan to divide what was left of Palestine between them.¹⁶ The Oslo Peace Process (1991–2000), is but another more recent example of multiple failed

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present



The four maps above were originally produced by the Palestine Israel Action Group. They state, "PIAG has produced Educational Resources and Tools for Activists that can be used by religious and secular organizations locally, nationally, and internationally. We invite readers to adapt these materials for use in their own communities."

endeavors.¹⁷ While this peace process was being negotiated, Israel continued to take more land and to build more settlements in the West Bank. One of the major peace brokers over the past two decades has been the United States, itself morally challenging, since it is the primary arms supplier to the Israeli military.

The focus of the UN on Israel/Palestine has continued, resulting in numerous resolutions critical of Israel. Aside from the core issues—refugees, Jerusalem, borders—the major themes reflected in the U.N. resolutions against Israel are its unlawful attacks on its neighbors (Resolutions 111, 171, 228, 248 etc.); its violations of the human rights of the Palestinians, including deportations (Resolutions 636, 641, 681, 694, 726, 799), demolitions of homes and other collective punishments (Resolutions 592, 605, 672, 904, 1322, 1405); its confiscation of Palestinian land; its establishment of illegal settlements (Resolutions 446, 456, 465); and its refusal to abide by the U.N. Charter and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Resolutions 446, 471, 607).¹⁸

**"We ask for your help to give peace a new chance
to thrive in our world."**

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre

From 1967 to the Present

In the years following the 1967 war, Israel, now fully in control of the land of historic Palestine with more than 400,000 settlers living illegally according to international law on Palestinian land, intensified its efforts to control the lives of Palestinians. The land presently is so cut up by Jewish settlements, Israeli only roads and lands confiscated by the Israeli military that a two-state solution is virtually impossible. The settlements form a choker-like necklace around each Palestinian town and city.¹⁹ No one can visit family or get medical attention in other parts of the West Bank without going through at least one, and usually more, of the over 522 dehumanizing Israeli checkpoints. Gaza is the largest open air prison in the world, its inhabitants surrounded on the sea, on land and in the air by an Israeli military blockade. "Because the Zionists [Christian and Jew] wanted the land without the people who inhabited it, the major policies and laws of the state of Israel were designed to strip Palestinians of their land"²⁰ bringing to reality a Zionist slogan, "a land without people for a people without a land." [Map 4]

In December 1987, the first Palestinian Intifada [Uprising] took place. For the most part a non-violent protest, it was met with a brutal response. Mitri Raheb indicates that this was the moment that began to change international attitudes to the 1967 war that saw Israel as tiny David defeating Goliath. Seen on TV screens worldwide, one of the prominent pictures of the Palestinian uprising showed "a young Palestinian boy with a stone in his hand facing the latest model of Israeli military tank."²¹

The intifada was an intelligence surprise for the Israelis, and even when it persisted, Israeli security personnel and decision makers failed to grasp its significance. "Contrary to the claim by the government of Yitzhak Shamir—that the PLO initiated the intifada – it was a spontaneous outburst caused by economic, social and national factors alike.

To this day there is no good explanation for the intifada's vitality and survivability in the face of the price it exacted from the Palestinians in human life and material resources. Financial aid from the Arab states to the



ne of the over 500 Israeli Checkpoints.

All photos have been provided by the author or The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society. They are from previous participants of study tours to the Middle East.

Palestinians was minimal and of secondary importance. It was mainly women's organizations, workers and students who preserved the revolutionary ardor and social solidarity.

The fomenters of the intifada represented a generation that grew up in the shadow of the Israeli occupation, with all its internal contradictions: between an "enlightened occupation" and threatening Jewish settlement. Some Palestinians adopted the idea of nonviolence, which guided the uprising in its initial stage, but this approach ultimately collapsed under the weight of the violence and counter violence [from Israel].

The popular character of the intifada generated unprecedented international sympathy for the Palestinians and their struggle against the Israeli occupation. This was the Palestinians' "finest hour" and enabled them to add a creative new chapter to the epic of their national struggle."²²

A second Intifada occurred in 2000, provoked by a number of factors similar to the first uprising: "excessive use of brutal force by the occupiers, increased taxation, or religious insult", as well as the failure of the Oslo Accords to make any progress toward peace.²³ While the response of the majority of Palestinians was to throw stones at the occupying forces or to attack a soldier, armed guerilla fighters also emerged, fighters willing to die for the liberation of Palestine. It was during the second intifada that suicide bombing emerged as a response to the deaths of Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli military.

Although the Palestinian Christians diffused a movement to form an armed Christian resistance,²⁴ an increasing number of Palestinians saw suicide attacks as the only resistance available to them given the internationally well financed and superior Israeli army. While some saw the attacks as a way of responding to their suffering under occupation, others wanted to avenge the large number



of Palestinian civilian deaths at the hands of the Israeli army. At the beginning of 2005, when the Palestinian and Israeli leaders declared a ceasefire after four years of the Palestinian intifada or uprising, the leading Palestinian militant group Hamas declared it would “respect calm” - though it reserved the right to respond to Israeli attacks.

Other groups followed suit.²⁵

So much more could be said about the history of Palestine/Israel between 1947 and 2005.

Needless to say in the years that have followed it is clear that the Nakba did not end in 1949 but continues to this day in the increasing number of illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the ongoing destruction of Palestinian homes, the revocation of their residency rights and deportations. Study 4 will focus on the present situation and the anguished cry of Palestinian Christians to us, Christians in Canada, and to those in the rest of the world.

Additional Reflection:

Psalm 122:6–9

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.” For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, “Peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. (NRSV)

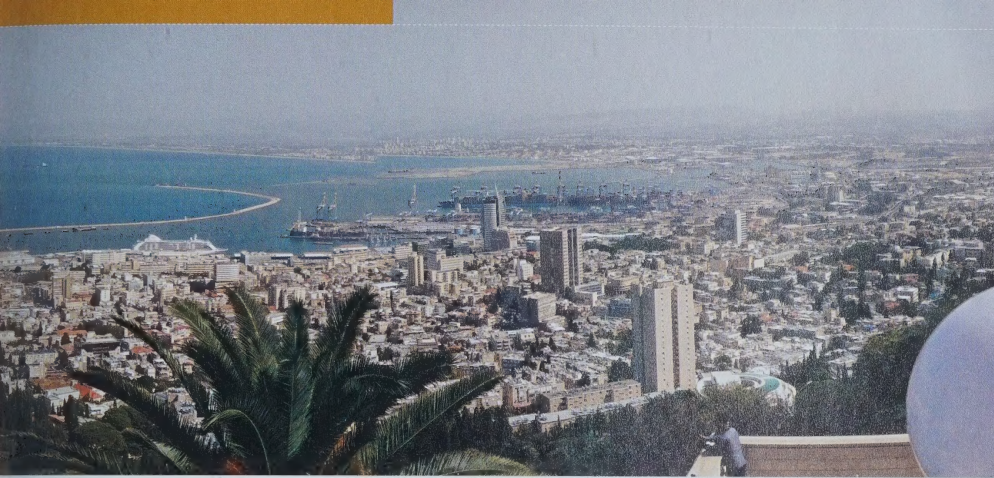


Photo: Haifa – a city where Israelis and Arabs live together in peaceful coexistence.

Matthew 23:37–39

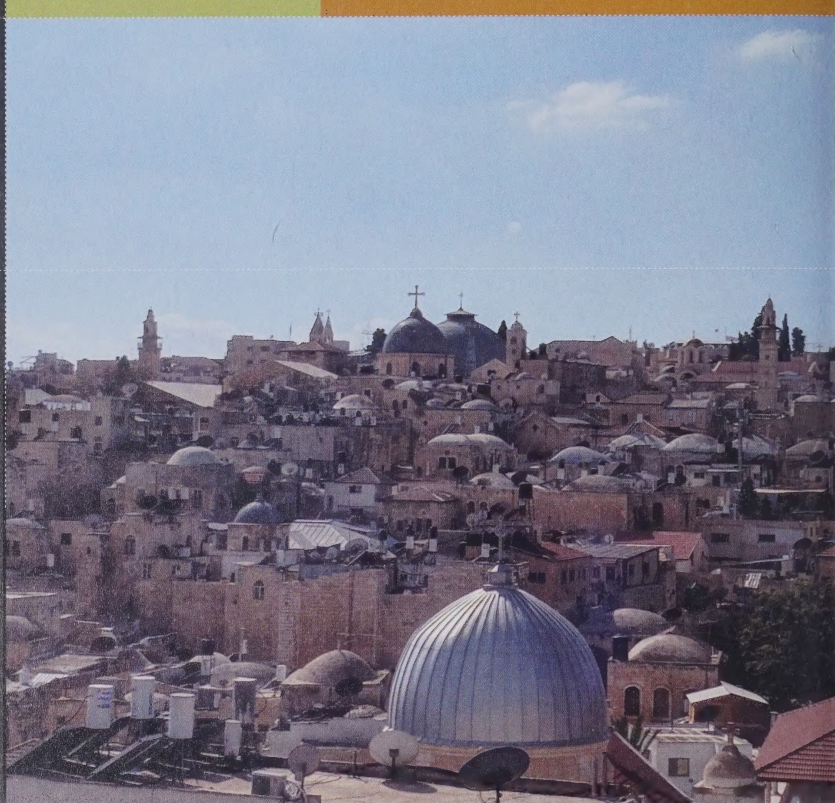
“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”(NRSV)

1. In light of the history described discuss the scripture passages above. What do they suggest to those of us who seek to follow Christ?

2. If possible, watch the movie *The Gatekeepers*.

The Gatekeepers tells the story of the Shin Bet, perhaps the most active and certainly the most secretive of Israel’s security forces, and it tells it from the perspectives of its leaders who, more than anyone, received the trust of the country’s political elites. In a series of candid interviews, they talk openly about the major events that marked their tenures. At their most intimate, six former heads of the Shin Bet muse publicly about the morality of torture and terrorism, arrests and assassinations. The citizens they swore to protect may have been safer as a result of their actions, but was the country any closer to peace? <http://www.thegatekeepersfilm.com/the-film.html>

3. Explore further some of the websites referred to in this study. How has your understanding of the history of the land of Palestine been impacted by what you have seen and read?



¹ Naim Ateek, et al., *The Bible* p. 301. For more detail on Sabeel see footnote 1, study 1.

² Thomas Waskow, "Twice Promised Land," *Tikkun*, vol. 5, No. 5. The editor of *Tikkun* is Rabbi Michael Lerner. Its editorial policy is set out in the following way: "Tikkun has taken the view that Jewish morality and prophetic tradition require a challenge to all governments, including that of Israel, to live by the highest ethical standards. The more Israel rejects Jewish morality and the Torah's injunction to "love the stranger" in its treatment of the Palestinians, the more it loses the support of the most ethically sensitive people in the world and of many younger Jews in the diaspora. We are committed to full and complete reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinian people within the context of social justice for the Palestinians and security for Israel. Our view is that solutions to intractable conflicts begin as increasing numbers on each side can empathize with and tell the other side's story. That is an exceptionally hard thing to do in this case, given the traumas both Jews and Palestinians have suffered, but we believe it is possible." <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/healing-israel-palestine>.

³ Naim Stifan Ateek, *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 37-38⁴ Michael Prior, ed., *Speaking the Truth: Zionism, Israel and Occupation* (Northampton, Mass., Olive Branch Press, 2005), p. 193

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Partition_Plan_for_Palestine.

⁵ <https://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>.

⁶ <https://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>.

- ⁷ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), p. 1-4.
- ⁸ Ilan Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing* p. 90.
- ⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Stern-Gang>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonreport.me/2006-may-june/hamas-a-pale-image-of-the-jewish-irgun-and-lehi-gangs.html>
- ¹¹ Using money donated by the Jewish National Fund (Canada), the park almost completely obscures the fact that there ever were Arab villages in the area. In recognition of Canada's contribution, the park was named "Canada Park", and the names of many Canadian donors appear on a large monument in the park. A powerful video entitled "Canada Park; Park with No Peace" was made by the CBC's "Fifth Estate" in 1991. It can be found in the CBC Fifth Estate archives.
- ¹² Zochrot ("remembering" in Hebrew) is an Israeli NGO working since 2002 to promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba and the reconceptualization of the Return as the imperative redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants. <http://zochrot.org/en/content/17>
- ¹³ Read more: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/canada-park-and-israeli-memoricide/8126>
- ¹⁴ Donald H. Akenson, *God's Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 228.
- ¹⁵ Raheb, Faith, p. 16. One of the contributors in Prior, Speaking, p. 195 states that Israel is the fourth largest military power in the world.
- ¹⁶ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), p. 237.
- ¹⁷ For example, the Madrid Conference (1991)
- ¹⁸ Donald Neff, Former Time Magazine Bureau Chief, Israel, Fifty Years of Israel, Originally printed in the Washington Report in March 1993.
- ¹⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/israeli-settlement-expansion-war-mind-160815124618735.html> - the story of one Palestinian man's struggle to keep his land.
- ²⁰ Ateek, Palestinian Christian, p. 56.
- ²¹ Raheb, Faith, p. 30.
- ²² <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/the-first-intifada-how-the-arab-israeli-conflict-was-transformed.premium-1.484677>; excerpts from an article by Prof. Avraham Sela, a senior lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a research fellow of the university's Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace.
- ²³ Raheb, Faith, p. 75.
- ²⁴ Ateek, Palestinian Christian, p.7.
- ²⁵ Information in this paragraph is taken from: ews.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3256858.stm

Mission In Action

Blair Bertrand, Malawi **Theological Training is Tough**

Any kind of theological training in Malawi is tough, lay training especially so. The logistical barriers are staggering. While Malawi's overall literacy rate of 65.8% is better than some of its neighbouring countries, it is still far below the world average of 86.3% or of countries such as Canada which are roughly 99% literate. Most often literacy here means the ability to read and write a short, simple statement relevant to everyday life. This standard is not very high and is inadequate for deep thinking about difficult subjects.

Add to this the reality that the majority of Malawians are poor. They need to make every kwacha (the Malawian currency) count. All education must have financial benefit as an outcome, otherwise people will not invest what little money and time they have in it. There are some people who take some form of Christian education for the spiritual benefit but large-scale efforts that make demands on people's time and resources must have some pragmatic payoff or they will fail.

Theological Education by Extension Malawi (TEEM) offers various kinds of theological

education. One of these, what is often called 'grassroots training', is outside of the conventional education system. Based on the idea that all of God's people should have the opportunity to love the Lord with all their heart and minds, grassroots training gets out of the classroom and into people's lives. Given that there are thousands of Christians for every trained minister, an educated laity has the possibility of changing the face of the church in Malawi.

Grassroots training like this faces another challenge that other forms of education do not. Malawi is a hierarchical society which, according to Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede, means that "an organisation is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralisation is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do, and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat." Grassroots training is designed to be egalitarian, decentralized, student-driven, and consensus seeking. In other words, grassroots training is the exact opposite of Malawi's general value system.

The Rev. Patrick Mbanga gets this better than most. Mbanga is a minister within the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Blantyre Synod) and was educated here in Malawi, but he

also spent time at Knox College in Toronto. The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) supported his studies and he got to see first-hand a very different understanding of education. In his work as one of four centre coordinators for TEEM, he sees what happens when large groups of people can engage directly with basic theological education. Uniquely, as a CCAP minister and therefore part of the upper levels of hierarchy, Rev. Mbanga can work with his colleagues to demonstrate the value of grassroots training. He recalls his time in Toronto as an education on education; in Canada, he really saw a vision for widespread lay education in Malawi.

Part of my work here in Malawi, work that is paid for by International Ministries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) through Presbyterians Sharing, is to aid Rev. Mbanga and his colleagues at TEEM so that the power of releasing the Gospel amidst all of God's people can happen. I am not the first PCC minister with that mission. The Rev. Scott, TEEM's first Executive Director, who was also a PCC minister, has now retired. Then, as now, the harvest is ready but the workers are few. Hopefully, through the partnership between the PCC and people like the Rev. Mbanga, the numbers of workers can increase.

Pauline Brown, India

Rev. Glynis Williams, Associate Secretary for International Ministries, recently spoke to Pauline Brown and provided the following updates:

- The churches are thriving in the Vindhya Satpura area and are growing and enlarging their buildings to accommodate the new members. This includes the churches in Punyawat, Mendha, and Amkhut.
- Recently there was a bi-annual Diocesan event held in Amkhut, with about 3000 people in attendance, and roughly 400 youth participated!
- A retired physician, who was supported by the PCC in his medical studies many years ago, recently sent funds to Pauline to be distributed in the area. She was able to use this money to help the pastors in this area, who are poorly paid.
- Caroline Solomon who attended the Women's Gathering in May, still tells everyone how wonderful it was, and how wonderful the PCC is. Pauline said that the WMS should be very proud of their decision to bring Caroline to Canada!

Pauline appreciates prayers for all the people in Vindhya Satpura and sends her love to all!

Council Executive Meeting

The Women's Missionary Society Council Executive met on November 15–16 in Toronto. We began our meeting together worshipping with the national staff of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly, the Rev. Peter Bush, led worship. He shared stories of his trip to Taiwan. He said that in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the focus is to build up the congregation, the body of Christ. That needs to be our focus as well.

Several decisions were made by the executive during their time together. First, the WMS will host a regional gathering in Vancouver in 2018. Although plans are just beginning, it looks like the event will be held in the Fall of 2018 in the Langley area. Like our national Presbyterian Women's Gathering, this will be a time for all the women of the church to come together to worship and learn together.

The executive also decided that they would close down The Hub website effective January 1, 2018. Although it has had some success, it was felt that the interest was not high enough to continue with it. However, the Presbyterian Women's Gathering facebook page continues to have some growth, so we will continue to utilize this page and increase its content.

After some discussion, the executive decided that the 2018–19 study for *Glad Tidings* will focus on Indigenous Experiences around the World.

Several grants were approved from our memorial funds including a grant to Hummingbird Ministries to record a CD in the Cree language, a grant for Peterborough Presbyterial for an educational event, and funds for several children and youth to attend camp. The executive also approved a grant for Winnipeg Inner City Missions' Infants and Toddlers

in the Church and their Learning and Play Program from undesignated funds.

In reports, Rev. Sarah Kim spoke about The Presbyterian Women's Gathering in May 2017. There were approximately 500 participants and it was once again a well-received event. Plans are already beginning for the 2020 Presbyterian Women's Gathering.

Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald reported on the work of the Life and Mission Agency (LMA) of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He expressed the gratitude of the LMA to the WMS for all that their mission support—moral, interest, and financial. He also gave an overview of the work of the PCC international staff. Ian also reminded us that the LMA continues to be involved in the important work of Healing and Reconciliation. Finally, the LMA is involved in work with local congregations.

Ian also reminded us that the church continues to talk about issues

of sexuality. He encouraged us all to be a part of that conversation, and reminded us that resources are available to assist with this.

In the evening, Susan McLennan spoke about her Healing and Reconciliation journey, having participated in the PCC trip on June 12–21.

She began with a quote from Annette Simmons: "The telling and hearing of stories is a bonding ritual that breaks through illusions of separateness and activates a deep sense of our collective interdependence." Many stories were told and heard on this trip which allowed for relationships to begin to be built between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The group visited Winnipeg Inner City Mission, Kenora Fellowship Centre, the site of the Cecelia Jeffrey Residential School, Shoal Lake no. 40, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the Canadian Human Rights Museum, Birdtail Sioux First

Together We Can! funds:

As of our meetings, the following has been received for:

- Kenora Fellowship Centre: \$1490
- Haiti: \$985

Thanks for supporting these important ministries!

Nation, Mistawasis First Nation, Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

Susan acknowledges the complexity of reconciliation, but she does have hope. She also encouraged us to learn about our neighbours, especially our Aboriginal neighbours.

On Thursday, our morning devotion led by Lisbeth Duncan, encouraged us to rejoice in this new day. Each day is a new day and time to start afresh. Something good is waiting for us.

Synodical Reports were also shared while we were together. British Columbia Synodical has closed. They

to have a women's camp every year. Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario has three groups. They use the Glad Tidings studies. They also expressed their appreciation for having Sarah Kim, Janet Brewer, and Joan Smith visit them in June.

Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda have 8 presbyterials and 3 affiliate presbyterials. They use Glad Tidings and also are good at working together. Groups will advertise and attend events held by other groups. Southwestern Ontario had a wonderful synodical meeting this year and is looking forward to their 2018 synodical at Chedoke Presbyterian Church in



Groups were encouraged to be flexible. Even getting together for fellowship is important and part of the WMS!

are continuing to connect through an e-newsletter that can also be sent by post. Some groups have closed, some have amalgamated with other women's groups, and some continue to get together.

In Alberta and the Northwest, there are still groups, but they no longer have presbyterials or synodicals. Saskatchewan has only one WMS group, but they continue

Hamilton. Quebec and Eastern Ontario Synodical expressed their appreciation to the staff and the planning team for the 2017 Women's Gathering. They currently have 9 presbyterials

Groups were encouraged to be flexible. Even getting together for fellowship is important and part of the WMS!

WMS Council will meet in May at Crieff Hills.

In the Society

Presbyterial

“What type of soil are you?”

That was the question four women from Kincardine put to the guests as they led worship at the **Maitland** Presbyterial Fall Rally at South Kinloss Church on October 2. The women from South Kinloss offered a wide variety of Fall desserts to start off the evening and Donna Sutton welcomed those attending.

Four women from South Kinloss presented a musical number accompanied by Dale Gilchrist on the piano. President Mary Simmons chaired the evening. Betty Johnston from Ripley thanked the WMS on behalf of two boys from Ripley, who were enabled by the Presbyterial to attend Camp Kintail this past summer.

Laura Newson introduced our guest speakers—her friends of thirty years, Bob and Deb Loree of Listowel have been passionately involved with missions in Bolivia for many years. They have led mission trips from their church in Listowel. A woman in Bolivia named Greta has started a project called Emmanuel Foundation for Children in the red light district of Cochabamka. It is a day centre that provides nutrition, cleanliness, crafts, and learning for the children of that city who have no one to take care of them during the day. They help children with special needs,

and encourage parenting skills in the neighbourhood. The first building had a second story added to it and now a third floor is being built with a classroom and a bedroom for sleeping eight children, who have nowhere to go for the night. A community garage sale is held every year in Listowel to help fund the Emmanuel Foundation. Many in Bolivia have come to faith through this project.

Rosemary Neilson, Carol Enright, Carol Scheill, and Joan Threndyl directed us to Matthew chapter 13:19–23, the parable of the sower, and challenged us to be good soil and produce a bumper crop for the kingdom of God.

Mae Raynard of Lucknow thanked everyone who contributed to the evening, and Karen Webster from Wingham closed in prayer.

Niagara WMS Presbyterial held its Spring Rally along with its Annual General Meeting on May 31 at Scottlea Presbyterian Church. The theme was Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

Rev. Wendy Lampman led the worship service and took us through the list of people in Paul's letter to the church in Rome. We realized that lists are a part of our lives too and that Paul's list sounds like a list of leaders in any of our churches today. Today,

leaders are still called to learn more and spread the good news.

Christine Cummings led the Memorial prayer. We also had members report on the South Western Ontario Synodical and the Women's Gathering.

On the theme, *Today* was presented by Paige Leslie and Liam Johnson, two young people who have just returned from mission work in South India and Nepal with Youth With a Mission. Their orientation was in Hawaii where they learned about their destinations and the skills they would need in their mission work. Their youthful enthusiasm and interesting ideas were an inspiration to us all.

After the usual delicious pot luck lunch, Debbie Kallender and Nancy Miller presented the *Past* by having the members in five groups each look through the photo albums, which had been carefully kept over the years of the meetings of the Presbyterian as well as special events. We then reported on the highlights of those years as well as on several memorable people.

Alexis McKeown then talked to us about looking ahead into the *future* and described some of the new things which groups and individual members have been doing. There were suggestions about looking to the lives of other women in the church and in the community. To widen our minds, she gave us a challenge of

finger-weaving, which we all tried with mixed success. We felt moved with God's help to look beyond our usual WMS ways.

London Presbyterian Mission Day was held on October 19 at Knox-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Dutton. The thirty ladies that were present celebrated the theme, Looking Back.

After refreshments and registration, Rev. John Van Den Berg and Debra Webster led a lively sing-a-long. President Valerie Shaw welcomed everyone and opened in prayer. After the Rev. Sarah Thompson greeted us, we sang, Tell me the Old, Old Story. Then we had roll call and the treasurer's report.

Cathy Reid then put on her 'press hat' and interviewed members on their WMS experiences through the years. Eva Murray and Joyce Pollock took as back many years. Joan Bayce then shared some of the history she had discovered from the history boxes Marion Weldon had saved and which had been given to her after Marion's death. Winn Files then relayed the history of the deaconesses, who had served in this area. Other WMS members were then invited to share their WMS stories.

Sheila Sullican and Anne Marie Henderson led the worship service on the theme. Valerie Shaw closed the meeting with prayer and we sang, Brother, Sister, Let me Serve You.

The Fall Rally of the **Waterloo-Wellington** Presbyterial was held on October 16 at Rockwood Presbyterian Church in Rockwood.

Following delicious refreshments, President Dr. Wilma Welsh opened the gathering by inviting everyone to join in to recite the WMS Purpose.

Barbara Bonner of Rockwood WMS led the worship time.

Dr. Tori Smit, CNOB Synod Minister for Faith Formation, warmly introduced our guest speaker, the Rev. Susan Clarke, as an old friend from their days of training as diaconal ministers. Rev. Clarke, from Knox church, Elora, presented a fascinating and informative account in words and pictures of her trip to Taiwan in June 2017, where she and Dr. Wilma Welsh shared in the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Bunun Presbytery, which is twinned with our own Waterloo-Wellington Presbytery. Rev. Clarke closed the meeting with the benediction.

Barrie Presbyterial held their Day Apart on October 14 at St. Andrew's, Barrie. The day's theme was, Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

Presbyterial President Janice Terry welcomed all and opened with prayer. The leaders for the day

Joyce Bawcutt presents Cathy Reid, Synodical President, with Izzy dolls after Cathy's presentation on Malawi at Paris Presbyterial in October.



were Alexis McKeown, Program and Communication Coordinator and Colleen Wood, Editor of *Glad Tidings*. St. Andrew's WMS presented devotions on being thankful for our blessings.

Alexis and Colleen prepared inventive icebreakers allowing us to get to know each other while having fun. Next, there were six spirituality stations to visit, such as an "I praise" table and a "I give thanks" table. Each station helped us to build our faith. After a delicious lasagna lunch, June Campbell led in a sing-song. Alexis and Colleen spoke on meeting the needs of women in the church and the world as well as encouraging others. Collen reminded us that *Glad Tidings* shares stories of faith and mission from Presbyterian women and others. As a way to share with others, we filled jars with dried beans and spices for a "Friendship Soup." The WMS is women doing mission.

This inspiring day concluded with the Rev. Peter Ruddell leading us in the celebration of communion.

Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial Fall Rally was held in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Arnprior on September 30. The theme, Apples of Gold, was reflected in the decorations. Margaret Hughes from Arnprior warmly welcomed all.

Kathi DesChene, gave the treasurer's report and Janet Mrenica gave the council report. Several women who attended The Women's

Gathering reflected on their experience. It was also mentioned that both Joan Hilliard and Lottie Sutherland had both been nominees for The Women of Faith award.

Mary-Lynn McConnachie led the devotions. Gail Carroll, Tilana Knoetze, Janet Mrenica, Kathi DesChene, Betty Fraser-Smith and Betty Zwiers each received one of the letters of the word 'APPLES' and a Bible verse to read. (Proverbs 15:23 for **Appropriate**, Psalm 16:24 for **Pleasant**, Proverbs 10:11 for **Pure**, Luke 4:24 for **Lovely**, Proverbs 12:25 for **Encouraging**, Proverbs 15:1 for **Soft**) Each Bible verse described the kind of words our Lord likes to hear. This was followed with the hymn, A Fitly Spoken Word, with Betty Zwiers as pianist.

Our president then led our Bible study. Several bible passages from Proverbs, Matthew, and James were read and questions answered. Words we say come from our hearts and influence our actions. Thus, we are told to keep our words encouraging, kind, positive, and affirming. We then played a number of games involving apples.

The afternoon guest speaker, Janet Mrenica, shared Mission Tour Stories about Indigenous Women. This past summer, Janet met the Rev. Margaret Mullin, trained nurse and Presbyterian minister, at the Winnipeg Inner City Mission. At the Kenora Fellowship Centre, Janet spoke

Remembering

Marian Currelly
Marg Johns
Mattie Searles
Marce L. Wood WMS
Auxiliary
St. Andrew's, Cobourg ON

Joan McKeen
New St. James
London ON

Roberta MacIsaac
WMS Helen Young
Auxiliary, Paris
Presbyterian Church
Paris ON

Bernice Keough
Nora Seaton WMS
Paterson Memorial
Church
Sarnia ON
Carol Wright
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women, St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Church
Scarborough ON

Jacquie Wilfret
St. James Presbyterian
Church
Stouffville ON

Margaret Black
Thornhill Women's
Missionary Society
Thornhill ON

Linda Smith
WMS Goforth Evening
Auxiliary, St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Church
Wingham ON



with Nancy Morrison, a residential school survivor. Nancy, at age 88, has written the book, *Approaching Dawn*. Janet also visited the site of the Cecilia Jeffrey School. In Guatemala, Indigenous women are now gaining a voice and becoming empowered. Janet saw the improvement that the

Guatemala Stove Project has made in their lives. Silent prayers were offered for the Winnipeg Inner City Mission, the Kenora Fellowship Centre, and the women of Guatemala.

President Mary-Lynn McConnachie closed the day with a benediction.

Rev. Leo Hughes, Vivian Young, Margaret Sams, and Betty Fraser-Smith drying dishes at Lanark-Renfrew Fall Rally.



April 29, 2018

Theme:

*Understanding Truth
Living Reconciliation*

by Rev. Mark
Tremblay

Scripture:

Daniel 1: 1–7

Matthew 28: 19–20



Mission Awareness Sunday

Resource
is Available

The worship resource for Mission Awareness Sunday will be emailed out in early February. The material can be downloaded from www.wmspcc.ca/mission-awareness-sunday. For a paper copy email amckeown@presbyterian.ca.

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Glad Tidings

March/April 2018



24 Easter Worship by Colleen Wood



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Glad Tidings

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Although it's raining today, we are hitting double digits in our temperature. Finally, a little bit of warmth. I know, it's still only February and I do live in Central Canada, but still, it will be a nice break today, and it fills me with hope.

Iwonder how much hope the early disciples of Jesus had. While Jesus was alive, there was likely anticipation and expectation almost daily. What amazing thing is Jesus going to do today? How many thousands will come out today and believe his message? What exciting road will we travel today?

But, then their friend was charged and crucified. Did they still have a glimmer of hope? Do we?

Sometimes I get down on my own faith. Sometimes it seems all hope is gone. It's often not something big that has happened, but just laziness. My life might seem perfectly good, but my soul is dry and bare. Bad habits have taken over the good. Is there still hope?

Often, I get down on the Church. As numbers decline and our influence on this world seems non-existent, I wonder if we even have a purpose anymore. Are we changing lives? Are we changing this world? Is there still hope?

Yet, Easter teaches us there is still hope. Easter teaches us that even in the face of untold suffering, even in the face of death, there is hope. Easter teaches us that yes, God faced death for us. God loves us so much that he died for us. And when the souls of the disciples likely felt like they would break, God conquered death and met them again.

Today, no matter where you are in your faith, know that there is hope. Know that God suffered humiliation and death, but that it did not end there. Know that God conquered death, and that same God loves you so much. Know that there is hope, for each one of us and for God's Church.

Family Nights



by Lauren Wasyluk

Family Nights events at St. Andrew's Kitchener has become a growing ministry for young families both within our congregation and our greater community. We started hosting these events more than ten years ago, and since then they have evolved to suit the needs of the modern families in our area of Southern Ontario. Currently, Family Nights occur on the last Sunday of each month from 4:30–7:00 p.m. and include three parts: activities, worship, and food. As these events have developed, our average attendance has grown from 50 to 100.



It's so exciting seeing our church full of kids, parents, grandparents, and even neighbours. Everyone's family looks a little different, but at St. Andrew's Family Nights there is a place for everyone and when we get together we all have such a great time.

Each Family Night has a theme. Coming up with the theme each month is one of the best parts of my

job because there are so many great ideas out there and so many different ways to pull a theme together. It's kind of like planning a birthday party for 100 kids, and I get to do it six to eight times a year! In the past we have done themes such as superheroes, Minions, hockey, Disney's Frozen, and Mad Science. We even hosted a beach party in January! In October and November we have holiday-themed events for Halloween and Christmas. I don't know what it is about our Presbyterian members, but they sure do love dressing up in Halloween costumes and ugly Christmas sweaters!

Each part of Family Night carries the theme in its own way. When families first arrive they come into our gym. The gym is set up like a fair or carnival with stations all along the outside. We decorate the space with themed colours and decorations and we enthusiastically greet each family as they arrive. Attendees have about an hour to participate in as many of the stations in the gym as they would like. We create a variety of activities to choose from so there are games and crafts for kids and teens of all ages and ability levels.

One of our goals for Family Night is to make sure that the whole night

is accessible for everyone and this means thinking about how the room is set up and what activities will be available. The activity portion of the night is a great chance for families to connect with one another over a shared experience. It's been a joy watching families deepen relationships with each other and with other families that attend our events each month. This relationship building is important, especially among the 25–45 age demographic at our church, because many of them are looking for a community and Family Night at St. Andrew's help create that for them.

The second part of the night is worship. Around 5:30pm we call everyone together and ask them to head to our worship space for a half-hour service with one of our ministers. Our worship during Family



Night is casual and contemporary. Our worship band leads us in songs and prayers, and then we listen to an interactive message from our minister. Our Lead Minister, the Rev. Dr. J Mark Lewis has a blast creating messages and stories for these events. I think it's because the themes allow him to dress up as different characters, and build giant props for his lesson. In the past, he has dressed up as Indiana Jones, a Minion, and a ghost buster. The kids, parents, and grandparents love listening to his messages because they are always interactive and fun. One of our beliefs about worship at Family Night is that it doesn't have to be somber and serious—sometimes it can be loud and disruptive. The most important thing is that it is always meaningful and full of spiritual lessons for all ages.

As these events have grown, we've changed the way we refer to things like the worship service or the sermon. Family Nights have attracted a lot of new faces to our church and for many of them the whole 'worship experience' is a foreign concept. We want to make sure that the environment we create at Family Nights is accessible, especially for our new or unchurched friends who might be in attendance. This is why we prepare our worship service so that it's easy for them to participate. For example, at our October Family Night in 2017, we had 50 new people from the community in attendance. We chose worship songs that would fit our theme for the evening, but wouldn't include imagery or words that were difficult to understand. We even started the worship service off by



singing a popular song by U2, “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” because the words are beautiful and spiritual and the song is familiar to those outside the church. By opening with this song, we made our guests feel comfortable to participate right away even when they were in a completely new environment. We use this same thought process when we think about what type of message will be presented and how the different parts of the service fit together. This approach is working as we see many returning guests who feel welcome to be a part of our church family at our Family Nights.

The third part of our Family Night is food. Like the activities and the worship, the meal that we serve is also based on the theme. For example, when we had our superhero night

we served super foods, and at our Minion’s night our menu was full of yellow dishes. At our last Christmas event, we served a full holiday meal with all of the fixings—some of the guests said the stuffing was one of the best they had ever tasted! The food is made by a different church committee each month. This arrangement has been fantastic because we’ve gotten to work with amazing volunteers who had never been involved with a Christian Education event before. We’ve had meals prepared by our Local Outreach team, National International Outreach Team, Woman’s Association, Human Resources group, and even the Property Committee!

The meal is an important part of Family Nights because for many families cooking a balanced meal and



getting everyone around the table at the same time can be a struggle. Family Night gives families the chance to have a night out together, and to laugh, worship, and strengthen relationships—and no one has to worry about doing the dishes at the end of the day. Meal time at Family Night is served at round tables and we encourage families to sit with someone new and get to know each other over a meal. There is something spiritual that happens when we share food together as a church family and it's beautiful when we can include new faces and visitors at these meals each month.

I'm really proud of how our Family Night events have grown and

changed over the years. It takes many hands to put these events together and I am so grateful to have such a loving and engaged team of helpers every month. I can't wait to see what themes and activities we'll come up with for the 2018 season!

Lauren Wasyluk is the Christian Education Coordinator at St. Andrew's Church. Lauren is married to Mike Wasyluk (Youth & Young Adults Leader at St. Andrew's) and they now live with their two 14-year-old tabby cats Bud and Scout. Lauren graduated from the University of Waterloo with a BA in Legal Studies and Business Co-op and is continuing her education by completing the Lay Certificate Program through Knox College.

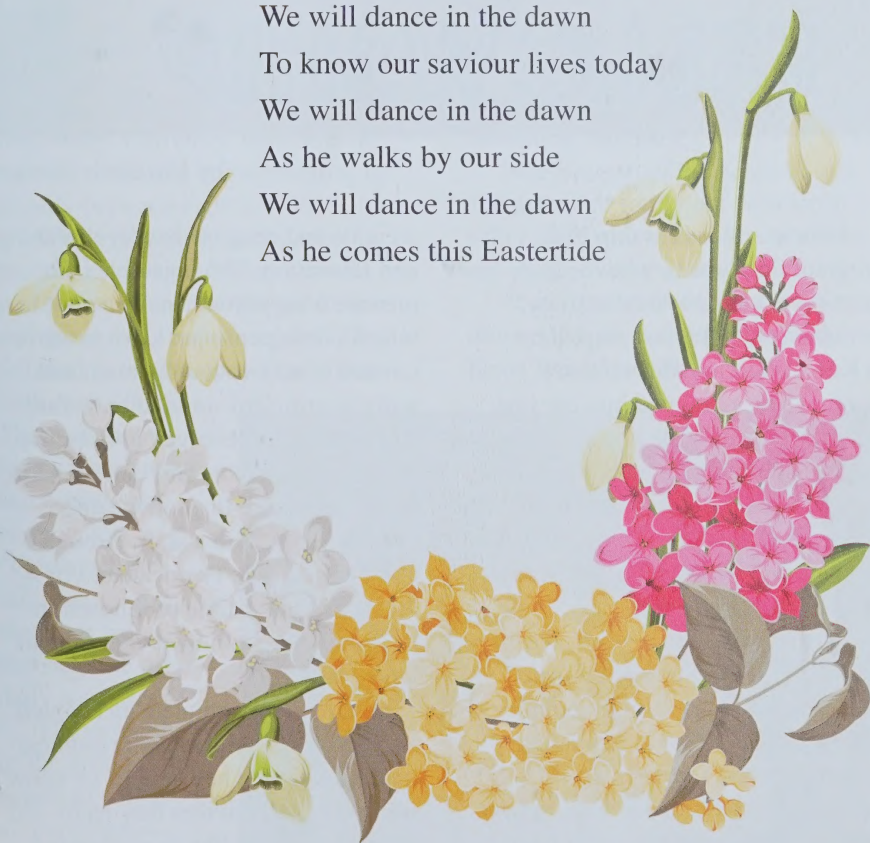




We will Dance in the Dawn

by Maureen E Kowal

We will dance in the dawn
To know the stone is rolled away
We will dance in the dawn
To know our saviour lives today
We will dance in the dawn
As he walks by our side
We will dance in the dawn
As he comes this Eastertide



FITNESS AND

FELLOWSHIP

by Elizabeth Thorsen

Fitness and Fellowship is a program for women, who meet once a week for physical activity, refreshment, and fellowship. Here at Knox Waterloo, this ministry began when we moved into our new building in 2011. The group includes both those who worship at Knox and women from the community—all are welcome. While most of us are in the 60s and 70s, we range in age from our late 50s to those over 80.

The physical activity is based on components of physical fitness focussing on balance, joint mobility and strength, as well as relaxation. A typical week's session would begin with a general warmup; upper joint mobility; strength, including

weights and exercise bands; stretching and relaxation. The objective is to provide a supportive environment in which participants can learn to move correctly, with encouragement and without criticism—and to have fun! The content has evolved in response to some of the likes and 'not so' likes of the members. In good weather, we often start with a walk through an adjacent park. Physical activity is followed by a time of fellowship: refreshments, sharing, and getting to know each other.

Participants complete an adapted ParQ (physical assessment readiness questionnaire). They also let us know what physical activities they enjoy and what they would like to accomplish.

The reasons for coming are mainly for the exercise and fellowship. When asked why they come, one group member responded that she comes for, “fun, and fellowship, and feeling good.” That certainly is the aim! Other participants said they come for “exercise and making new friends,” “good fellowship and to strengthen my body,” “try to keep supple and to gain more muscle strength,” and to “get some exercise in a social setting.”

Participant numbers tend to vary—some have family responsibilities from time to time, others have seasonal activities, such as hiking or skiing, and several women travel frequently. Currently, there are 18 names on the role but attendance is usually between eight and 14.

We have a lively group who are interested in and supportive of each other. We share the good times and those that are not so good. The fellowship time keeps us up to date with each other.

There are many topics which arise and one woman commented, “I always hear information from the other ladies that help me in my daily activities.”

The strength of the group is the extent to which all participate—making coffee,

cleaning up, tidying the hall, and most importantly for me, filling in when I am away. There is a real sense of shared leadership. As one participant said, “We have truly bonded as a small exercise class.” Socially, we usually have a Christmas lunch or cookie time and an end-of-year lunch. Also, there are ‘significant’ birthdays to be noted.

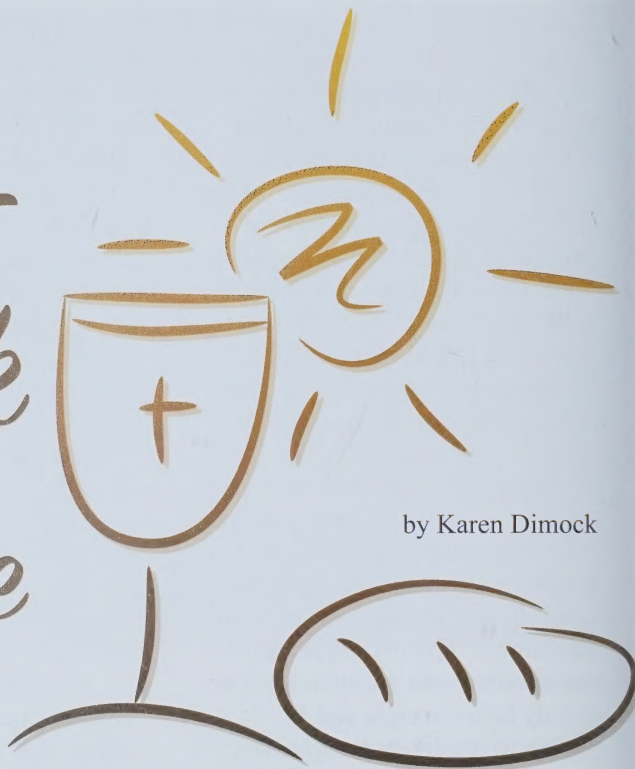
The Fall session begins after Thanksgiving and continues into Advent; the Spring session starts after Epiphany and goes to the long weekend in May. There is no fee but each term we contribute to one of Knox’ ministries. These have included Upward Sports and the ‘live streaming’ ministry.

We feel part of the Knox family and are cared for by our wonderful office staff who make sure the doors are open, always with a smile.

If any group would like to know more, I can be reached through the Knox Waterloo office.



Mid- week Peace



by Karen Dimock

Henri Nouwen in his book, *Clowning in Rome* talks about all the many churches one comes across in that very busy city. They are empty places for much of the week he noted and yet, and as I think about it at the same time in their very emptiness they show us a place set aside for coming into God's presence, a place where God also waits for us.

It has been years since I read that book and while I am sure I don't remember what it said exactly, my remembrance of it has changed the way I have looked at churches ever since. From the classic wooden buildings encountered on rural roads

to modern buildings in the suburbs to stone edifices in our downtown cores, here in Canada and around the world, church buildings stand as witnesses to God's presence among us. And while I often simply pass them by, I treasure how, even when closed and empty, they show us a sanctuary, a place for finding God. They even remind me sometimes, when I pause to pay more attention, of the place within myself that so deeply longs to be with Christ.

I have been serving as minister at St Andrew's Church in Ottawa for just over three years. Our sanctuary, located across the street from the Supreme Court and just

west of the parliamentary precinct is a historic one. We worship like most congregations on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, but, in the last two decades, we have come to worship as well on Wednesdays. In the middle of the work week, our bell rings out at noon and then, from ten after twelve until twelve thirty, we welcome people in for a Service of Prayers for Peace and Communion.

The origins of this service go back about twenty years. As we researched it, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Johnston, who is my predecessor in this church, writes to us that it actually began with Knox Church which is our Presbyterian neighbour on the other side of the parliament buildings. The Rev. Dr. Stephen Hayes was the minister at Knox and it was his idea that communion be served mid-week in the Presbyterian Churches on each side of Parliament Hill.

The worship we offer is a simple service. There is no music. We gather in the silence of the sanctuary, the only sound is the ringing of the bell as people arrive. Then for the next twenty minutes we pray, read Scripture, share a short meditation, and offer prayers for peace. Then we move to the communion table. For the longest time, it was bread and wine that we shared but now to be more welcoming, it has become bread and juice. The service ends with a blessing and sharing the Peace of Christ.

The service has never been a large

one, often there are just a handful of people who gather. Some members of the congregation who worship on Sundays also attend on Wednesdays, but in recent years a small community of folk who work downtown have come to make St. Andrew's their mid-week church. Some of them have also started to come on Sundays, but for most it is the Wednesday service that makes a difference to them. We also often welcome visitors to the city, people who are on vacation or here for work, people from across the country and even around the world, who have seen our sign and come in and join us.

One lady who works in the office tower beside us told me once that she listens to hear the bell ring for the service, and even if she cannot get away from work she is glad to hear it ring. Once when the bell rope wasn't operational and the ringing didn't happen, she came in to see what was the matter, and to check that the service was still happening.

Some have remarked recently that it is the peace the service offers that draws them in. The sign outside says Holy Communion and Prayers for Peace. A recent visitor who works on the 'Hill' said recently, "Your Church is a place of peace."

The prayers for peace have become increasingly important to me in the few short years I have been leading this service. In recent years, there has been much violence in the

world and in 2014 that came very close. Less than a kilometre away from us, Corporal Nathan Cirillo was shot and killed at the National War Memorial and his shooter was subsequently shot inside the Parliament Buildings. This was just before I arrived at St Andrew's. It was on a Wednesday and even under lockdown they celebrated communion here at St. Andrew's.

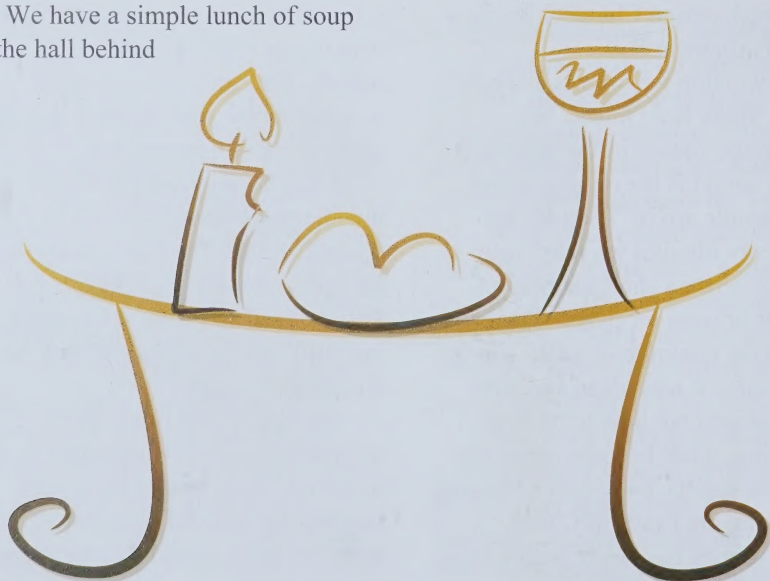
We always offer prayers for peace around the world and here at home, but there is a need for peace in people's lives as well and in the midst of the week this is often what brings them—the sanctuary, the prayers, the sharing of bread and cup. Afterwards some choose to remain in the sanctuary and its silence, others rush back to work, and some join us for lunch.

We have a simple lunch of soup in the hall behind

the sanctuary after the service is over. A team of four takes turns making and serving the meal, and as we move from sanctuary to dining table our communion continues, lives touch, care happens.

Years ago, something Henri Nouwen wrote made a difference in the way I see churches and the presence of God they bear witness to, not just on Sundays but on all days. On Wednesdays at St Andrew's we are finding a way to welcome and participate in that witness.

Karen Dimock is the Minister at St Andrew's, Ottawa. She wrote this article in consultation with Gail Bowes, who co-ordinates the service and lunch, and Luc Dione, now an elder in the church who first came to St Andrew's on a Wednesday!





Our Heart's Song

by Susan McLennan

Whenever I am asked to write an article or share a meditation, I invariably begin with a song or a children's story for inspiration. The poetry of songs or hymns always bring other images to my mind. Often children's stories are beautiful ways of explaining emotions.

The story I wish to share with you is called, "The Heart's Song" by Gilles Tibo and illustrated by Irene Luxbacher. It is published by Scholastic Canada Inc. and is a

beautiful story about Miss Matilda, a woman who goes to the park every day and fixes things for people: "On sunny days, Miss Matilda repaired toys, and sunglasses, parasols and sun hats."

But one day a child comes to Miss Matilda with a broken heart, and Miss Matilda holds him and loves him until his hurt is better. "From her park bench, she still repaired toys, but people also brought her other hurts to heal."

At the end of the story, Miss Matilda herself is broken hearted from the death of her pet canary. But because she has taught all the children about love and listening, caring and compassion, the children surround her now with their gifts of music, pictures, poems, and messages of love.

If you have children or grandchildren I would highly recommend this book. The children who come to Miss Matilda are all very different—all different sizes, shapes, and colours. They all have different problems: from losing a pet, to wanting a friend, to wanting their daddy to come home. She receives all the children with problems, all sizes, and shapes and colours. Scholastic describes the book as “a story of community, love, and friendship”.

Each one of us is uniquely situated to be a Miss Matilda for someone, especially if you are a “chronologically gifted” individual with a lifetime of experience. Listening and showing love and compassion are gifts that older adults can share in abundance.

I teach Sunday school at my church and have a class of bouncy children from ages five to ten. Sometimes things get noisy and I wonder if the stories are filtering through. I have learned through the years that a large part of teaching Sunday school is the development of relationships. Even if you don't think that anything is happening, a trusting

relationship is forming.

At the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering last year, the Rev. Hugh Donnelly taught us a new hymn from the Presbyterian Church USA hymnbook, called “For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table” written by Shirley Erena Murray. It begins by saying “For everyone born, a place at the table, for everyone born, clean water and bread, a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing, for everyone born, a star overhead”.

These are rights that every child and every adult should have. These rights are guaranteed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of a Child.

As parents and grandparents, or loving aunts and uncles and friends—as members of Christ's community—we can listen to all who seek a place at the table.

Over and over in the gospel stories Jesus welcomed the outsider—the children, the woman caught in adultery, the leper, the woman with the sick daughter, even Zaccheus and Mathew the Tax Collector. No one was outside of Jesus' love.

In Mathew 22 Jesus is asked a question:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And

the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV)

Does this help us to be Miss Matilda for someone? Love God and love your neighbor.

As I continued to think about this, I looked up a book by Leo Buscaglia published in 1982 called "Living,

Loving and Learning" for inspiration. The book opened to the following underlined passage, "I think that people need nurturing. I mean that in all honesty. We need to be loved."

What is our heart's song? Is it a song of love, of compassion, of nurturing? Are our churches communities of love and friendship? Let us always strive for that ideal!

*For young and for old, a place at the table, a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled, for young and for old, the right to
belong, and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice, and joy!*

~Shirley Erena Murray



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Image from *Read. Wonder. Listen. Stories from the Bible for Young Readers* by Laura Alary, illustrated by Ann Sheng (Wood Lake Books, 2018)

ter Fools

by Laura Alary

During Holy Week a few years ago, a mischievous word processing glitch, combined with some sketchy proof-reading of the bulletin for Easter Sunday, transformed all the exclamation points into question marks. Needless to say, this changed the tone of the Call to Worship:

The tomb is empty?

Christ is risen?

The Lord is risen indeed?

Hallelujah?

I will never forget the baffled expressions that crept across the faces of the congregation as it slowly dawned on them that something was not quite right. I laughed until I cried. But after I mopped up the tears and caught my breath, it occurred to me that our bewildered liturgy had probably captured the tone of the first Easter more fully than our usual confident declarations.

Picture Mary Magdalene, stumbling through the pre-dawn darkness outside the tomb, her vision blurred with tears. When she meets the Risen Jesus, questions tumble from her lips: *Who are you? Where is my Lord? Where have you taken*

him? Where have you put his body? In Luke's version of the story, the women gasp out their mind-boggling news to men who do not believe them, "because their words seemed to them like an idle tale." It takes the confirmation of Peter—a man—to convince others that there is any substance to this extraordinary report. Small wonder the women in Mark's gospel say nothing to anyone "because they were afraid." Afraid of what? Not being believed? Being dismissed as hysterical or weak-minded? *Jesus is alive? What do you mean? How can that be? Do you take us for fools? Is this some kind of joke?*

Question marks abound in the biblical resurrection narratives. And so they should. People do not normally rise from the dead, so the claim that someone has done so ought to provoke shock, astonishment, wariness, and yes, skepticism.

I've always considered Thomas a kind of personal patron saint. Although he is stuck with the pejorative nickname *Doubting Thomas*, I've always found him to be the embodiment of a robust faith.

Thomas thinks for himself. He uses his powers of reason and observation. He asks questions. He will not simply accept what he is told, even when the source is his most trusted friends. Thomas is a man of question marks rather than exclamation points.

Exclamation points are self-assured, confident, assertive, even bossy. They are sure of possessing the truth. They tell. Declare. Insist. Question marks, on the other hand, are humble and open. They do not claim to have all the answers. They listen. Ponder. Ruminates.

So while it may seem odd at first, I think question marks are far better suited to Easter than exclamation points. Why? Because certitude does not allow for change or growth. It is question marks, with their space for wondering, which have power to open the door to all that is fresh and new and astonishing.

Polish poet and Nobel Laureate Wistaw Szymborska once remarked, "Whatever inspiration is, it is born from a continuous 'I don't know.'" Every creative endeavor, from a work of art to a scientific discovery, arises from this place of humility, the acknowledgment that we do *not* know something, and are therefore in search of new insights, new solutions, new possibilities. *Not knowing* is the path to questioning, wondering, imagining, and creating what did not exist before.

If you want an example of this generative power of not knowing,

consider the apostle Paul (or Saul, as he was once known). Saul was originally a man of exclamation points.

A true religious zealot, not only did he aggressively persecute followers of Jesus, he firmly believed that by doing so he was fulfilling the will of God.

But then the inexplicable burst into his life. On his way to Damascus to arrest a group of those misguided Christians, Paul was confronted by a presence that identified itself as the Risen Christ. In a matter of minutes, everything Saul thought he knew—his black-and-white vision of the world—exploded into fragments of grey.

Out of the mess, something remarkable emerged. Blind and disoriented, Saul groped his way through a fog of questions: *What just happened? Where am I? Who am I? Where am I going? What am I supposed to do? What is true? What does this mean?* Without these questions, Saul would likely have continued along the same fixed and certain path. Instead, Saul became Paul. All the vitriol and certitude were gone, their flames quenched in the waters of baptism.

Mind you, the new Paul was in some ways just as blustery and opinionated as the old. But having his certainties shattered changed him in one fundamental way. He was now open to being surprised.

I imagine Paul would have enjoyed—maybe even chuckled

at—the peculiar timing of celebrating Easter Sunday on April Fool’s Day. More than any other biblical writer, Paul had an acute sense of the apparent foolishness of the message of the cross. He even calls himself a fool—a fool for Christ.

Some of this language is tongue-in-cheek, of course, a cagey way of heading off opponents who belittle Paul and his preaching as simple-minded. The cities of the

a victim of malicious gossip. As for his message, it is hard to say which is more absurd: Someone rising from the dead? Or worshipping a condemned criminal?

In response, Paul engages in a bit of verbal ju-jitsu, turning these attacks to his own advantage. Yes, he agrees, the message of the cross *does* sound like foolishness. And yes, he himself appears to be a fool, not someone to be envied or imitated. But—and here

Question marks, on the other hand, are humble and open. They do not claim to have all the answers. They listen. Ponder. Ruminare.

first century Graeco-Roman world were full of teachers hawking competing philosophies of how to live a flourishing and meaningful life. Paul has to admit—probably because his critics have already pointed it out—that he is not exactly a walking advertisement for the new life he proclaims. Once a well-educated, respected Jewish religious leader, relatively secure and well-off, he has now sunk to being a poor, itinerant preacher, rejected by his own people, dependent on the work of his hands to support himself, and physically scarred from many misadventures. His catalogue of sufferings is impressive: shipwrecked, flogged, arrested, attacked by mobs,

is the crucial point—appearances can be deceiving. What you see may not be what is.

What looks like failure and humiliation might reveal itself to be a strange kind of victory. What seems like weakness might actually be strength. Those wounds and scars you see may have brought healing. Death may be the threshold to new life. The ending may be a new beginning. Surprise.

For Paul, the apparently foolish message of the cross is far more than a proclamation of a strange and unusual event. The cross is a pattern, a lens through which we view and find meaning in our own lives. This is why Paul can speak of being crucified

with Christ, sharing in his dying and rising. None of this makes sense unless Paul is speaking of an ongoing process in which we all participate. The apparently foolish message of the cross is about more than Jesus. It is also about Paul. And about us.

Twice today I have heard news so sad it brought me to a standstill. First came word that a man I know has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. This husband and father will not be here to see his young children grow up. When the phone rang next, it brought news of the sudden death of the daughter of a friend.

Question marks abound. And so they should.

One of my questions is this: What does the story of Easter have to say to people whose lives have been broken into pieces? It is not enough to point to some future hope. What is the message of the cross for them *here and now*?

It is tempting to try to provide an answer, to fill the gaping hole of silence with confident and reassuring words. But I cannot do that with integrity. Because I simply don't know.

I don't know what happened inside the stifling darkness of the tomb so long ago. I don't know exactly who or what Mary and Peter encountered in that dew-drenched garden. I don't know what took place in that locked room where Thomas sat. I don't know what

phenomenon Saul experienced on the road to Damascus. I don't know what happens after we die—apart from the obvious biological processes. I don't know how life will unfold for those grieving families. I don't know what is in store for me and those I love.

But there is a strange kind of hope here. By confessing *I don't know*, I open the door to countless possibilities, a vast field of white space where nothing is yet written.

When I consider my own life, I see so many little deaths: poor choices; missed opportunities; rejection; decisions driven by fear. But when I view my life through the lens of the cross, when I connect my own story with the story of Jesus, dying and rising with him over and over again, I feel a new kind of strength. This is not wishful thinking or hallucination. It is an act of faith, rooted in the testimony of others who have plunged into the fog of unknowing and experienced tendrils of new life springing up out of death.

I'll trade you an exclamation point for a question mark any day. Especially at Easter. Question marks give me hope. Hope that I may yet be surprised. Astonished. Wonder-struck. Blessed with insight. Stirred by new life. Question marks give me hope that my story is not over yet. And neither is yours.

So call me a fool. An Easter fool.
Christ is risen?
He is risen indeed.

A Prayer for Lent

(based on an ancient prayer of the church)

Give me, O God, a steadfast heart,
which will not be drawn down by unworthy distractions;
Give me a courageous heart,
which will not be worn out by trials;
Give me a pure heart,
which no trivial matter may divert.
Give me understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find
you,
and faithfulness that will finally embrace you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

From a worship service written by the Rev. Ian Ross McDonald in
the February 2012 edition of Equipping.



Easter Worship

by Colleen Wood

Call to worship:

One: The stone has been rolled away,
All: and the tomb is empty.
One: Christ is risen.
All: Christ is risen, indeed.
One: Let us walk with our risen saviour.

Hymn: #258, Thine be the glory

Prayer of Confession and Assurance

One: Risen God, in this time of Easter, we remember our need for forgiveness.
All: When we doubt your power, forgive us.
When we follow our own way instead of yours, forgive us.
When we act and think selfishly, forgive us.
When we fail to act with kindness and joy, forgive us.
Help us to accept forgiveness, to forgive others, and to live out our commission with joy and kindness.
One: Christ died so we might be forgiven. Let us go out and forgive others.

Scripture: Read John 20:19–31 and 1 John 1:1–2:5

Hymn: #452 Jesus, stand among us

Reflection: Living out our Commission

Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said.

I often try to imagine how the disciples must have felt after seeing Jesus, their friend, and really their whole life, crucified. Anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one knows the pain and suffering of loss. I expect for the disciples there was an additional level to their pain. They had left their earlier lives to follow Jesus. And now, not only had they lost their friend, but they lost their leader, their life.

And, then he appears—the risen Christ. And in this appearance, he breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” In that moment, their life changes again. In that moment, they are given power, authority, and a commission. They are no longer left to mourn, but to move onwards with a new strength. Easter gives us the same purpose.

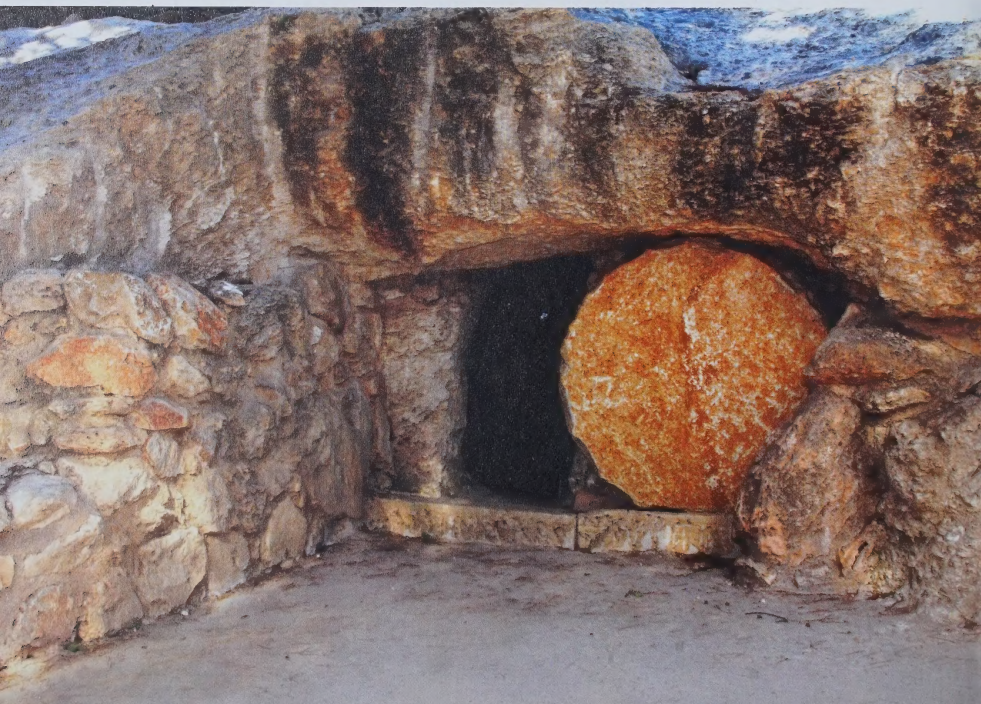
With holidays, just as we rush to get ready for them, we sometimes rush just as hard to ‘clean’ them up afterwards. With Christmas, it is the rush to decorate, bake, clean, and find the perfect way to show others we care about them. Then the day comes and we celebrate. But, soon after the presents have been unwrapped and the shortbread has been eaten, we are ready to pack it all away for another year.



With Easter as well, the Season of Lent seems to fly by and before I know it is Good Friday and then Easter. After some time with family, Sunday morning worship, some chocolate, and a big meal, I move back to my regular routine all too quickly. Any of the truths learned and good habits developed seem to be quickly forgotten too. We go back to our normal life, sometimes relieved that the holiday is over.

But for the disciples, they are not able to just go back to their normal life. Too much has changed. I often try to place myself in the minds of the disciples. The pain they felt after Christ was gone must have been overwhelming. They had left much behind to follow Jesus, and now he was gone. What would they do? Where would they go? All that they had believed was gone. Their work, their livelihood, their belief-system—destroyed. Their fear and uncertainty must have been overwhelming. They locked themselves away, likely hoping it was all a bad dream and that they would awaken soon.

But then the news, and the appearances—Christ is alive! And when Christ appears, everything changes. They are now being sent out in a new way with a new power. They go forth and this new Christian community takes shape. Certainly, it is not perfect, but they seem to be a changed people, taking the resurrection seriously. Much of the work of the early church was filled with



kindness, hope, generosity, and community. They are walking together in the light.

As I pack away the Easter leftovers and eat just one more caramel egg, how will I take the resurrection seriously? How will I take the power of the resurrection out into daily life? How will it affect the way I live in Christian community. How will I live out my commission to walk in the light?

If you have been in the church for any length of time, you know that church is an amazing, fascinating, life-giving, and at times, frustrating place. It is not surprising, as there are fewer and fewer places in society, where we place people of varied ages, various ethnicities, and various socio-economic levels together. Add to this that church is a very important place for each of us as it is where we feed our very souls. So it is not surprising that we can become a little selfish in what we want 'our' church to be. We want to connect with God within our community of faith.

For some, the music of the organ connects them to God. For others, bring in the drums and guitars and let us raise our hands to God. Some prefer to pray to God in responsive prayers, while others prefer a time of silence or to pray through the words of a leader. Some want to bask in the light as it streams through stained glass windows, while others like to praise God by the side of a river. Some think our money should go to build up the local church so we can reach out to our local community, and others believe a larger portion of money needs to be sent to minister to our neighbours in far-a-way lands. For some, it is the friendships that build up their faith and help them to encounter God.

Yes, in worship our goal is to praise God. Yes, worship should prepare us to walk in the light during our week. Yet, I still wonder if instead of looking for ways to meet our own needs, if perhaps what we need to do is look for ways that others can encounter God in worship. How would we need to change worship so that the five-year-old child, two rows ahead of us in church, can see God this morning? Or perhaps we need to ask, "How can our friend Lucy, who lives alone now, be moved by God's spirit today in worship?" Or maybe we should be wondering what we need to change to diversify our membership and welcome the stranger? What needs to change in my church, so that I feel comfortable inviting my neighbour, my friend, or even my own children to attend with me?

Yes, we all need a place to be nurtured in our own faith to be sent forth, but perhaps helping others in their walk might also feed our own journey. It might be just the thing to also help us walk in the light beyond our church walls. I think we can all agree that the needs are great as we live out our commission to keep

God's commands and to love others within our church and beyond our walls. Perhaps, if we start in our churches, looking for ways to ensure that we are living out our commission to be a kind, generous community, we will be better able to minister outside our walls as well.

If our church is living out its commission, maybe we will be better at reaching out to broken families, and we might just learn how to forgive the brokenness in our families.

If our church is living out its commission, maybe we will be better able to reach out to those in poverty in our own country and around the world. As our generosity increases, we can make a difference in the lives of others.

If our church is living out its commission, maybe we can be better equipped to welcome those suffering with mental illness as we share the love of our risen Christ with others.

If our church is living out its commission, maybe others will want to join us to make a difference.

You have probably heard the poem written by Howard Thurman, "Now the work of Christmas Begins." It is a wonderful poem reminding us that once all the shepherds have returned to their flocks and once the star is gone, the work is just beginning. The poem goes on to say we are:

*to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart. (Thurman)*

The same can be said for Easter. We have received the Spirit and we now serve a risen saviour. We have the Spirit of God breathed into us. We are a forgiven people. This Easter, together let us boldly and joyfully go out into the world to live our commission and continue the work of the Church.

Offering

Offering Prayer:

Loving God, let us love one another. May these offerings be used to share your love. Amen.

Prayer:

In this prayer, there will be several times of silence to allow you to offer your own prayer. You can offer your prayers either out loud or silently.

Dear God, we thank you for coming into this world and walking among us, your people. Today we remember that you conquered death. Today we celebrate with joy that you are alive. Risen Christ, let us live out our commission to be the light in this world. We are thankful that in fulfilling this commission, you are with us and we can bring our concerns before you.

We pray for our friends and family that are experiencing illness. (silence)

We pray for the areas of the world that are in conflict. (silence)

We pray for our church community and our church leaders. (silence)

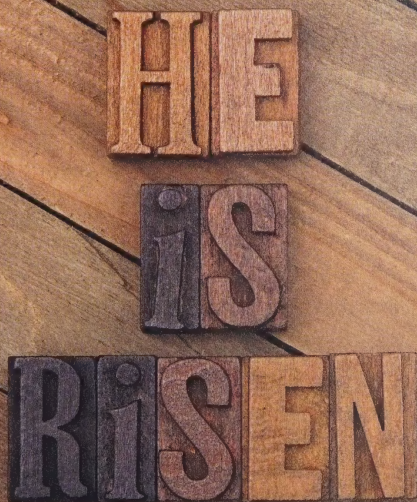
We pray for ourselves, asking that you help us to know how to best serve in this community and in our world. (silence)

Lord hear our prayers, silent and spoken. Amen

Hymn: #282, Filled with the Spirit's power

Blessings:

May we all go out this day, with the power of our Risen Christ, to live out our commission to be the light in this world. Amen.





by Colleen Wood

This past summer, the Vacation Bible School curriculum that my church purchased, talked of God Sightings. At the close of each day, the children were asked where they had seen God that day. One child might mention that they had goldfish crackers that day and that is their favourite snack. Another might mention that a leader helped them find their hat. Another child might be excited about making a new friend. The children easily talked about these moments and were anxious to share.

This Fall, we introduced this in a more subtle way into our worship services. Instead of asking individuals to verbally share their God Sighting, we encouraged them to write on a sticky-note where they might have

encountered God this week. These were then stuck on our windows along the side of sanctuary. This was likely a gentle way to remind the congregation that God is very near and a part of our daily life. I hope it also helped to remind the congregation to begin looking for God each day so they might have something to share. Indeed, God is with us, but sometimes seeing the work of God takes effort, or at the very least practice.

I think the Easter season is a great time to start thinking about where God is present in our everyday life. At Easter we remember that God is powerful and in control. Even in death, God prevails.

I think it can also help us cope with the negative news we receive

daily. Whether it is stories of sexual abuse, school shootings, or weather emergencies, we often feel helpless to deal with these issues. But, if we are daily looking at ways God is present in our world, we can feel some relief from the barrage of negativity. We can even look for God in these stories, looking for the helpers or the positive side of things. Fred Rogers is quoted as saying, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world." Great advice for each of us—in times of disasters, look for God.

So, I challenge you to start thinking about the places you see God in your day. To begin, you can do this at the end of the day, perhaps as part of your daily devotional time. Begin with prayer. Then think about the ways God has been faithful to you today. Maybe begin by thinking about things you are thankful for and acknowledging God's presence in them. If you can, spend some time

writing down where you saw God today.

As you continue to do this, you may just become more aware of God's presence in the moment. I know many mornings as I walk down the stairs and look out my front window at the beautiful sunrise, I take a moment to thank God for the gift of beauty to start my morning. It is a reminder to praise God at daybreak and a reminder of God's presence throughout the day. At other times, I might pass someone on the street, and feel a nudge to say a prayer for them silently in my head. Sometimes the laughter of one of my children brings me a strength of joy that I know comes from God.

As you continue to practice this, you might just find that your whole attitude changes. Perhaps your plans for the day, becomes God's plan for your day. Your hopes and dreams, might become the hopes and dreams that God defines for you. Your faith may become stronger as you tune the voices in head to focus more on God. It might even change your conversations with friends, family, and those in your congregation.

Will you ask yourself, where have I seen God today?

*What a beautiful thing, GOD, to give thanks,
to sing an anthem to you, the High God!*

*To announce your love each daybreak,
sing your faithful presence all through the night,*

Accompanied by dulcimer and harp, the full-bodied music of strings.

Psalm 92:1-3

IT'S TIME FOR JUSTICE

International Affairs Committee

Scared to admit that she had touched Jesus' robe in desperate hope for healing, a woman who had suffered hemorrhages for 12 years, and was said to be incurable, broke her silence and sought the help she needed (Lk. 8:43-48). She fought for her right for health and wellbeing.

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women and girls is a prevalent human rights violation worldwide. The World Health Organization reports that one in three women will suffer physical or sexual abuse. Violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. State Legislation does not always adequately protect women or ensure access to support when violence occurs. Gender-based violence is under-reported: women may not seek help from health professionals, law enforcement or even members of their own family when they have been assaulted.

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. 80% of Haitians live under the poverty line and more than half in extreme poverty. Political instability, poverty, and high rates of crime exacerbate and result in high



rates of discrimination and violence against women and girls. Haiti's constitution protects women from sexual and physical abuse and discrimination in the workplace, but these protections lack legislative teeth and enforcement. Human Rights Watch's World Report 2016 states that Haiti does not have specific legislation criminalizing rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment or other forms of violence against women and girls.



The Church Responds

Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) supports a number of vital organizations working to end gender-based violence. These include:

- Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health), a Haitian organization that works to prevent violence against women and girls, and helps victims of violence to access medical, psychological, and legal support.
- Community World Service Asia (CWSA) in Afghanistan strengthens girls' access to education & includes training women for employment.
- Organizacion Feminina Popular (OFP) is a Colombian women's rights organization.
- Héritiers de la Justice (HJ) is an organization in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo that runs a legal clinic to combat the impunity of gender-based violence.



Prayer

O Great Physician, you are present with women when they seek to heal. We give thanks for organizations that assist victims of gender-based violence and seek to protect their rights, dignity and wellbeing.

The International Affairs Committee is mandated by General Assembly to monitor and draw the church's attention to international issues. The full report is found in the 2017 Acts & Proceedings.



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Bible Study:

Inspiration from an Old Testament Prophet

by Shirley DeMerchant

What does WICC have in common with an Old Testament prophet? More than you would expect!

A miracle performed by the prophet Elisha is recorded in 2 Kings 4:1–7 providing us with a model for responding to injustice today.

A Family in Crisis

This passage centers around a widow whose life was falling apart. Her husband died leaving her to raise two sons on her own. His death had plunged her into a financial crisis, not just because of the loss of an income but also because of the debt he left behind. His creditor was at her door, threatening to take her sons as slaves in payment for the debts. She didn't have much, but what little she had was about to be taken from her.

A Cry for Help

In desperation, the widow turned to Elisha who had known her husband as a prophet and as a godly man. Elisha did not rush in to solve her problem. He



responded with compassion, with respect and with a listening ear. He asked her two questions, “How can I help you?” and “What do you have in your house?” His second question must have taken her by surprise. She obviously had no financial resources but his question forced her to take stock of what she did have. She did have a little oil left. What she was about to discover was that the little she had was going to be essential in changing her hopeless situation.

Hope Restored

Elisha gave the widow very clear instructions. She was to collect empty jars from her neighbors, take them home and behind closed doors, she and her sons were to fill the jars with the little oil she had. The widow was to fully participate in solving her problem. Elisha deliberately stayed away, perhaps so that God, and not the prophet, would be given credit for the miracle of the oil that filled all the empty jars and ran out only when there were no empty jars left. Imagine the thrill of the woman as she filled jar after jar and the excitement of her children

as they witnessed a miracle with their own eyes! There was enough oil to cover her debts and provide money for her and her family to live on. Imagine the joy of paying off her debts and explaining to her creditor where the money came from!

WICC: Restoring Hope to Women Touched by Injustice

This passage, for me, is an affirmation of the work and focus of WICC.

Sometimes at WICC, we are asked why we focus on the needs of women instead of having a broader focus.

There are two reasons for this. One reason is based on scripture. Throughout the Old Testament there are commands for God's people to care for the vulnerable in society, particularly widows, and there was harsh judgement when the people failed to do this (Deuteronomy 24:19–21; 26:12; Isaiah 1:17, 23; Jeremiah 7:1–7; 22:3; Ezekiel 22:7). The New Testament affirms the importance of caring for widows (Acts 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 5:3; James 1:27).

The second reason to focus on the needs of women is based on reality in today's world.

In Canada, 21% of single mothers are raising their children in poverty and for First Nations women living off reserve it is 37%.

In the US, women are 35 percent more likely to live in poverty than men.

If this is true for two of the most developed countries in the world, how much greater is the need around the world? Related to poverty are many other issues facing women such as violence, discrimination, and sexual exploitation.

Is it not right that WICC, Canada's largest interdenominational organization focus on the greatest need?

WICC provides grants through the World Day of Prayer as well as from the sales of our Awakening print. To apply for grants, groups must determine a need and a way to meet that need. We believe that women are creative and have the answers to many of the issues they face. Indirectly, we ask women not just what they need but also what they have. They have ideas, resources, and networks. With financial and prayer support, we encourage and equip women to be agents of change in their communities. We connect needs with resources while maintaining respect and dignity for women who want to improve their circumstances.

Our grants are changing lives around the world! We share the stories of women transformed by our grants in our Riding the Waves newsletter, on our Facebook page, through our electronic newsletter, and in the letters we mail out to our supporters throughout the year.

A Bold Prayer

Elisha was faced with a desperate need that he did not have the financial resources to meet. WICC faces the same dilemma. In 2017, we received 227 World Day of Prayer grants asking for a total of \$1,000,000! One of the reasons Elisha was used by God to restore hope to the widow was because of a request he made of the Lord and of Elijah. He asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:13). What a bold request! Yet, God granted that request. Scripture records twice as many miracles performed by Elisha than by Elijah.

As we celebrate WICC's 100th anniversary in 2018, we want to do more than celebrate our successes and God's faithfulness. We want to renew our vision to restore hope to women touched by injustice. Do we dare to ask, as Elisha did, that God empower us to do more? Would you dare to join me in praying for a double portion, that God would enable us to restore hope to twice as many women in the future than in the past?

Shirley DeMerchant is WICC's president. She lives in Woodstock, NB. This reflection was originally published in Riding the Waves, 9.1, Winter 2017.

We Respond

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God's promise
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and just world.

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WICC is Celebrating 100 Years

The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada is celebrating a century of progress through World Day of Prayer and other faith and social justice initiatives.

As we honour WICC's legacy, we also look forward to new ways of empowering women from all denominations to stand together for prayer and action. Together, we pursue justice, peace and reconciliation.

The Women's Missionary Society was an important part of WICC's beginning. On October 19, 1918, Bessie MacMurchy, a WMS member and missionary to India, invited representatives of five Women's Missionary Boards—Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian—to meet together to “promote the spread Christ's kingdom by united prayer, united action, and a stronger voice in national questions.” This letter led to the formation of the group which later became the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. This year, 2018, WICC marks its 100th Anniversary!

The Women's Missionary Society continues to support WICC and has a representative, Cathy Reid, serving on the WICC Board. We know many WMS groups across the country participate in the World Day of Prayer and/or Fellowship of the Least Coin.

Through WICC, we are part of a strong ecumenical group of women. Together, our voice is stronger. Rooted in our faith, we come together to support one another, and motivate one another to prayer for a more just, peace-filled, and compassionate world.

(My prayer)...is that they all may be one...

So that they may be brought to complete unity.

Then the world will know that you sent me

And have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20–23

This year, as WICC celebrate, it is asking for you to share your memories (photos and notes) from your World Day of Prayer gathering. You can send them through the link, <http://wicc.org/contact>.

Looking Back...Looking Ahead (From *NORTHERN LIGHT: The Official Newsletter of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, Christmas Edition*)

by Jon Wyminga

As I write this, we in the Cariboo House Church Ministry look back on an extremely difficult summer. Many of us will be recovering from it for quite some time, and many more of us are looking ahead to celebrate the birth of Jesus and a brand new year soon after that.

The summer of 2017 was the most devastating forest fire season in BC history and it felt like we in the Cariboo were among the hardest hit. At one time or another, everyone in our house church ministry was affected. People were evacuated from their homes in 108 Mile House, then parts of Lac la Hache, then Williams Lake and parts of the McLeese Lake area, then those of us in Nazko, Kluskus, and Titetown and later, Sheridan Lake. Canim Lake had the dubious distinction of being evacuated twice. (I may even have forgotten some other evacuations in this list.)

Large areas of forest were devastated along with much wildlife and, of course, so were several homes and properties. Still, I continue to be amazed at how many homes and communities were spared. We attribute that to God graciously

answering the prayers of many people. The raging Plateau Fire, which became the largest in the province's history, came within two kilometres of our community of Nazko, one kilometre of the village of Kluskus (80 km west of Nazko), and several kilometres of the cottage community of Titetown (65 km northwest of Nazko), and then stopped there for what felt like several weeks. Before that, it seemed to defy every effort of the firefighters to stop it.

We in the Cariboo, and many of you across the country, were praying in response to regular updates over the Internet. Earlier, the same firestorm wrapped its way around a small lake to the southwest of Nazko, but virtually bypassed the small fishing resort and its lone remaining occupant at the north end of the lake. We know another couple nearby who sadly lost everything on their property, but the fire stopped just short of consuming their house. Another family in one of our southern house churches was evacuated exactly a year after their home had been destroyed by fire in 2016. This time their house was completely spared, though the fire came very close indeed and they suffered significant property damage.

While we rejoice in these amazing stories, we also grieve the losses that many people suffered. Why were

some prayers answered and some seemingly, were not? We may never know the answer in this life. Even people whose homes were spared returned to face costly damage and a very long recovery. Other people we know lost their retirement dream, or their home, or property, or livelihood. When entire tracts of forest are consumed, what are the guide outfitters, trappers, and vacation resort owners supposed to do?

And, of course, we remember others around the world who suffered even greater devastation last summer: the earthquakes in Mexico, the hurricanes in the southern US and the Caribbean, and the resulting devastation that Puerto Rico is still trying to recover from. While we believe God created this beautiful world, we have to admit that it sure can descend into an ugly mess sometimes. It hits you right in the face when you live through a natural disaster. We might even question whether there is a God who created it after all.

As we look back on a devastating summer, we now look ahead with hope as we celebrate the coming of Jesus. I remember one of my theological professors at Knox College years ago who said that during this season of Advent we remember not just one coming of Jesus, but two. Of course we remember that Jesus came as a baby born in Bethlehem and was laid in a manger. We remember that he was the very “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) who came to

“dwell among us,” (John 1:14) and to share our human struggle. He even came face to face with our human tragedy when he died on the cross. But we also remember that he was raised victoriously over death, ascended to heaven and will come again to restore all things.

Unfortunately, many modern preachers of the second coming seem to focus on destruction—not restoration. Of course, Jesus seeks to restore people. That’s why we’re encouraged to receive that promise and put our trust in him. But the Scripture says he will also come to restore God’s good creation from the ugly mess it so often descends into. Listen to how the Bible puts it:

“For in him [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” (Colossians 1:19–20)

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:19–21)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,

and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-4)

Dr. Nick and Becky Bauman, Nepal I want her to live

I would like to share a particular story, whose ending I do not yet know and I'll try to keep the 'medical-ese' to a minimum...

A small baby girl was born at 35 weeks, and around the third day of life, the surgery team was consulted because her abdomen was distended, and she was vomiting up feeds.

Her X-ray showed that her bowel seemed to be blocked. Eventually, we were able to get a barium enema (where we put some X-ray dye up the bottom end, which can be helpful to make the diagnosis). She had a micro-colon, which showed that her large bowel had not been used at all and this helped us make the diagnosis.

There was a bit of a delay in trying to figure out what she had: the more common thing would have

been a condition called *Hirschsprungs* disease, where the large bowel doesn't work properly, and causes an obstruction. The enema and X-rays suggested that she had something a bit more serious: *jejunal atresia*.



Jejunal atresia is a condition where, sometime during the baby's development, part of her bowel died causing a blockage. If this insult is small enough, the baby will survive in-utero, but will have problems after birth when it starts to feed.

I had great help from some paediatric surgeons, one from Canada, another from Kenya, one in Kathmandu, and then a recent visiting paediatric surgeon who helped by involving his colleagues. In total, we had an email chain of six paediatric surgeons to help us sort this out.

It was clear the child needed surgery: the best location in Nepal for this is Kathmandu where there is a paediatric

surgeon and a hospital that could more effectively deal with her needs, and give her a better chance of survival.

The baby's mother is in Nepal, but her father is working in the Middle East. It is not unusual in these situations for the husband to come home sometimes for no more than one month a year. In this sad (but all too common) case, the father had not yet met his newborn baby girl. They did, however, already have one child—a healthy boy. It was a tough situation, since the mother was keen to go to Kathmandu, but the opinion by some staff here was that the decision not to seek more treatment was in part made based on the sex of the child. In reality, it was a tough situation for any family: the expense would have been huge in Kathmandu, and would have been a tremendous burden for the whole family.

After a long conversation with the mother, and with the help of a variety of Nepali doctors and nurses, all of whom did their best to provide some opinion, coupled with some translation also of my thoughts, the father decided that they could not afford to go to Kathmandu. We had told them it would not really be possible to do the surgery at our hospital. At one point, it seemed that the family was going to take her home—which would have ultimately led to her death in a matter of a few days. These were challenging conversations—especially with

regards to consent.

We discussed the options, and with trepidation, the surgery and paediatric teams offered to do the surgery and provide the medical care as a last resort.

The surgery went well, even though I had never done this before. We found a “high jejunal atresia,” and did a jejunal resection, tapering enteroplasty, and a Bishop-Koop stoma. Translation: “we-cut-out-the-bad-bowel-as-much-as-we-could” and refashioned the bowel together, with a bit of a “blow-hole” to help for feeding. In fact, one of the local residents here helped with the case and did all the important parts. It doesn't seem fair to the child to have to be repairing the bowel when it is only 1 cm wide.

Initially she did well, gaining weight, but she has had a heart-wrenching rocky course. The paediatricians monitor her first every day, and when we come by sometimes, the mother is smiling and on other days wiping away tears. The baby had a good week last week, gaining weight daily, but has now had two days of weight loss, and it isn't always clear why. She has been treated for sepsis-nyd (“infection-we-don't-know-exactly-where”) on two occasions, and hyponatremia (electrolytes-in-the-blood-out-of-whack) as well. Nothing is easy. One doctor suggested to me gently and without malice that probably we should have allowed her to go home.

And the journey continues.

Last week, when she had been doing well, I promised the mother and the surgical residents, that we would have a little party (“cool-drinks-and-samosas”) when the child reached her birth weight, which was about 1660 grams. She weighed about 1480 grams at that point but has lost a bit since. Of course that weight is somewhat arbitrary as who can say what other complications might happen after that. She still has a high chance of dying. I think this is one of the reasons babies aren’t named at birth here in Nepal.

But I would really like to have that party. I would like to feel that there is an earthly justice that will recognize our attempts to value the life of this baby girl as much as any other child. But as I sometimes tell my kids, “life isn’t fair.” I recognize that this is an unusual situation, and the ‘last-resort’ element of our care has increased the emotions involved, as has my own experience with having our own baby die two years ago.

Still, I’m not going to apologize in this case: I *really* want this baby to live.

Birthweight Day Party (Update)

In the Christian tradition, 40 days is a time of trial or judgement—think of the Israelites wandering in the desert and Jesus’ temptation after his time in the desert, among others. This small child has also had a time of trial

but on the 40th day of her life, she surpassed her birth weight of 1680 grams. She was discharged just a few days later having continued to increase her weight with breastfeeding alone.

On the 41st day of her life, we had a little party, where we shared some chocolate cake and tea. There was apparently some confusion at first, since we also brought our own baby: “Why was the doctor having a party for his baby?” was a question asked, quite rightly, by one of the newer moms. Satisfactory explanations eventually ensued.

Words of encouragement and thanks, both for her mother and for the medical and nursing team were spoken.

The child is still not yet officially named, but I believe that God has named this child nonetheless, and loves her at least as much as any of us ever could (words spoken by our minister a few years ago).

Psalm 139 “For you know my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”

Reprinted from The Presbyterian Church in Canada Mission Blog.



Arun Budha, the senior general surgeon at Tansen (and my boss) holding the babe.

In the Society

Presbyterial

Maitland Presbyterial held their 2018 meeting at St. Andrew's, Wingham on January 31 with the theme, Bundled Up With God's Love. President Mary Simmons constituted the meeting and the Rev. Carel Grundlingh, minister of St. Andrew's, brought greetings to the women.

Betty Faulkner, our guest speaker for the day, focused our thoughts to reflect on God's love for each one of us. She compared the love of a fiancée/husband to the love of our Father God. She encouraged us to be excited about sharing our love for Jesus as we bundle ourselves up in His love for us. The Rev. Charm Ireland led in worship.

The ladies of South Kinloss led a short memorial service for Mrs. Linda Smith. Then, the Nominating committee gave a list of the new executive for 2018 and they were

installed by the Rev. Charm Ireland of Molesworth and Brussels. Judy Watt gave the courtesy remarks and Mae Raynard closed the day in prayer.

~ Lorraine Clugston

East Toronto Presbyterial's annual Christmas luncheon was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, on Saturday, November 25. This event was opened up to the churches within the Presbytery of East Toronto and some of the congregations within Pickering Presbytery as well as to members of the former Oakridges Presbyterial. Approximately 55 people attended this event to celebrate the beginning of the Advent Season.

Alexis Cooke and Colleen Moynam presented on the theme, A Crafty Christmas. The room was set up with three long tables, each with a specific craft. On one table, people did brass rubbings. At the second table, Shirley Kedzierski led people in card

making. Chrismons, Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them, were made at the third table.

Following this fun time, we gathered in the sanctuary where Anna Cook and Katherine Allen led us in





carol singing. At this time, the Rev. Priscilla Anderson also presented Diana Wadsworth with a Woman of Faith Award Nomination for Lifetime Achievement. We ended our day with a delicious roast beef dinner.

On September 30, **East & West Toronto** joined for a Fall Rally at the church offices. East Toronto led the opening worship with singing and a meditation on Matthew 21:22–27.

Then, the Rev. Gordon Timbers, our speaker, shared his three-month mission in Palestine with EAPPI. He went to areas off the tourist path. They wore special vests for identification as a volunteer and they were able to see the conditions that the Palestinian Christians live with each day. He showed slides of the areas they visited. The Israelis are eager to take back the land so they throw stones, complain about the



noise of the animals, and the military come to take the farmers if their sheep get too close. In the military zone, any perceived threat can cause the destruction of the home and animals. The Palestinians stay on the farm so they do not lose the land. The Palestinians have to go through high-tech checkpoints to go to work or school.

West Toronto led the closing worship with scriptures and a meditation on Be Kind to One Another. Following this, we shared a time of fellowship over a lunch of soup, sandwiches, and desserts.

Beacan Presbyterian Church, Beaverton, hosted the annual meeting of **Lindsay** Presbyterial on January 24 with 24 women present. After gathering music and opening remarks, Wick Presbyterian Women shared a devotional. The business meeting followed.



Renfrew Presbyterian Church, and Dr. Margaret O'Hara WMS Auxiliary participated in the WMS Together We Can! projects, raising \$2616. They used a visual of praying-hands to represent each \$50 that was raised.

During the afternoon, an In Memorial Service reflected on seven members who had died in 2017. Blanche Simpson, on her retirement as pianist for many years, was presented with a Certificate of Membership. She was thanked for her faithful contribution of music.

The members were informed that Linda Grace led a decommissioning service for the Bolsover WMS on January 14. The group was formed in 1880 as the Ladies Aid and many fond memories were remembered at the service.

Linda Grace conducted the installation of the 2018 executive. The annual meeting closed with prayer.

~Linda Taylor

Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting at Community Presbyterian Church in Almonte on January 27. The theme was Hands to Work, Hearts to God.

President Mary-Lynn McConnachie introduced the executive and constituted the meeting with prayer. Vivian Young welcomed us and gave a short summary on how St. Andrew's, Carleton Place and Almonte Presbyterian Church had joined congregations. Beverly Blais and Susan McCuan-Harron provided special music.

Irene Nesbitt led a devotional based on Colossians 3:17. Irene read several scriptures from Proverbs and Psalms referring to the theme of Hearts and Hands and then we sang, Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You.

The Smiths Falls group led the Season of Prayer, followed by the singing of, In Loving Partnership. Margaret Sams and Betty Hardie of Almonte led the In Memorial. They opened with Psalm 23. Following a moment of silence we sang, Lo, How a Rose e'er Blooming, and then the service concluded with a prayer.

Remembering

Shirley Wilson
St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Church
Carleton Place ON

Marguerite Krueger
Mary Beth Wiegand
St. Andrew's WMS
Kitchener ON

Bill and Ruby Naylor
Knox Presbyterian WMS
Monkton ON

Jo (Joshephine) Gordon
Tweedsmuir WMS
Orangeville ON

Betty Grove
St. James Presbyterian
Stouffville, ON

Wilma Smart
St. Andrew's Church
Guelph ON

Reports were presented and approved. The day's offering was dedicated to the Kenora Fellowship Centre.

Following this, we had a Union Ceremony to unite the WMS groups of Almonte Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Carleton Place. Mary-Lynn McConnachie, had the president of the new group, Vivian Young (St. Andrew's), and the vice-president, Mary Cochran (Almonte), represented each of their groups. After promises were made to work in harmony with each other, Mary and Vivian each used a lit taper candle to light a single pillar candle signifying the union of their respective groups and the formation of Community Presbyterian Church WMS. Beautiful bookmarks, made by president Mary-Lynn to commemorate the union, were distributed to each person present.

Then Mary-Lynn McConnachie

led a Bible study called Talkng Hands. She had us hold our Bibles in the air while she said, "Swords in Scabbards." She then would give us a scripture verse to look up. We would repeat it and then lower our Bibles to look it up. The first person to find it would read it aloud. This was an interactive and interesting Bible study.

Lynda Windmill Forgues, our guest speaker and an artist, spoke about creativity. She also had a display of her work.

Joan Hilliard installed the 2018 executive and Janet Mrenica extended the courtesies. We closed by singing, Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I Go, and a Benediction was given by Mary McConnachie.

~Vivian Young

LOCAL

Vera Thompson was honoured on her 100th birthday by the Britton WMS, Knox Church, Listowel ON.

April 29, 2018

Theme:

*Understanding Truth
Living Reconciliation*

by Rev. Mark
Tremblay

Scripture:

Daniel 1: 1-7

Matthew 28: 19-20



The worship resource for Mission Awareness Sunday was emailed out in February. The material can be downloaded from www.wmspcc.ca/mission-awareness-sunday. For a paper copy email amckeown@presbyterian.ca.

**Mission
Awareness
Sunday
Resource
is Available**

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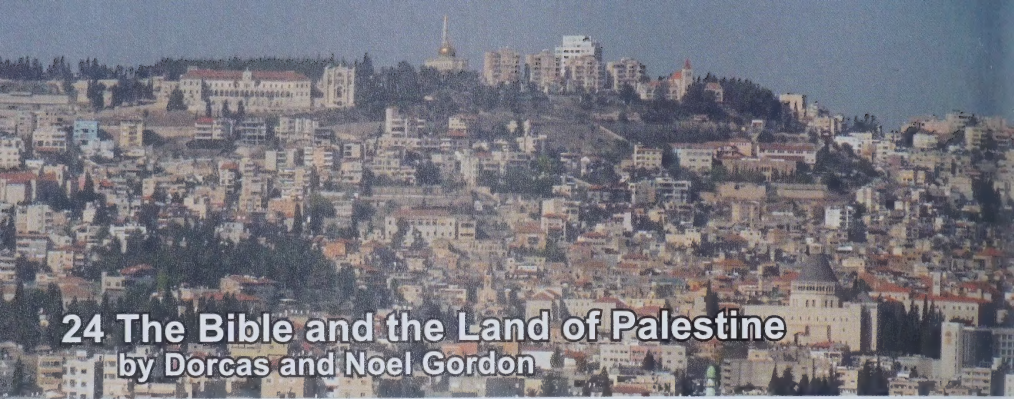
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by Dorcas and Noel Gordon

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May/June 2018

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As I write this, it is a dull April day. The rain has begun, but even worse, the forecast for next week includes cool temperatures and snow! I feel tired. Even my morning coffee didn't seem to bring me warmth and joy. It is on mornings like this, where I turn to one of my favourite passages from Matthew:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn

the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Matthew 11:28–30 The Message (MSG)

Most days, life is good, but there have been a few hiccups these past few months. That, combined with a busy schedule, and the cold days of winter, have me feeling like I am in a bit of a rut. I know how to get out of a physical rut. I have already improved my diet and am moving more. But, getting out of a spiritual rut—that is harder.

In the past, I have often turned to nature to nurture my soul. Right now, that is difficult, between the weather and my schedule. However, I have re-located my morning quiet spot. It is now in a Southeast facing window, where the sun, when it is shining, beams in and warms my body and my soul. I am also starting to journal again. It's a discipline I find hard, but when I am into the rhythm of it, it becomes meaningful.

Finally, likely the most important part of getting out a spiritual rut is to keep showing up. To keep praying even when I don't feel like it. To read a short devotional, even when I don't feel it brings me life. To keep attending worship, even on the days when I am tired.

I know this rut will transform. It is Spring and new life comes in the Spring.

And if you too are in a rut, or wanting to try something new, this month's *Glad Tidings* just might be the thing for you. Learn how others nurture their faith. Try something new. Move forward and above all, keep showing up.



Nurturing Ones Faith

Practical Actions for
Holistic Spirituality

by Heather J. Vais



God be in my head and in my understanding.
God be in mine eyes and in my looking.
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.
God be in mine heart and in my thinking.
God be at mine end and in my departing.

~Old English Prayer

In a world that is increasingly fast paced, chaotic, and stress-filled, many of us are longing for a deepening of our faith. Let's face it; the challenges of day-to-day life can chip away at our spiritual foundation. Sometimes we feel that God is very far away and we're not sure what we believe anymore. We long for renewal, reconnection, rebirth, and revival.

One day, a teacher of the law approached Jesus and asked him

of all the commandments which one was the most important. Jesus responded: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" The second is this: '*Love your neighbour as yourself.*'" (Mark 12:30) Here Jesus, the great Physician, gives us the first prescription for nurturing our faith! Jesus' approach to loving and honouring God is holistic. Love God

with your heart (emotional), your soul (spiritual), your mind (mental), your strength (physical); and love your neighbour (social), as (you love) yourself (personal). God wants every part of us. Faith permeates every aspect of our lives and so nurturing it should involve a holistic approach too. Here are some practical actions that you can use today to begin the process of holistic faith renewal.

Heart/Emotional

Are you a person who can wear your heart on your sleeve or do you keep your feelings private? So many of us these days don't want to get in touch with our emotions, so we keep ourselves occupied with other things instead of listening to what our hearts are saying. But God created us with emotion for a reason. Our emotions are like release valves for the heart and God wants to hear what we are feeling.

King David is a great example for us. David was one who took the broad spectrum of his emotions directly into his relationship with God. He rejoiced, cried, danced, sang, and even expressed anger before the Lord. David dared to bare his soul to God; and through the process of his venting to God, he found that God was working in his life to bring him peace (See Psalm 13:1–6).

Some of us only think to bring the good stuff to God. We turn off our negative emotions and thoughts and

try only to focus on the good. But remember what David knew: "Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely." (Ps. 139:4)

Do you bring only "safe" emotions to God? Nurturing our faith means being willing to tread into the dark places—to face our fears, inadequacies, doubts, and weaknesses. It means getting in touch with our heart and expressing all our feelings to God.

Action: Pray a Psalm as if you were praying those words from your own heart; or write a psalm reflecting your own feelings.

Soul/Spiritual

How do we love God with all our soul, and how do we nurture our faith from a spiritual perspective? If we understand the soul to be the essence of who we are, the very core of our being, then we can understand Jesus' words to love God with our soul to be a deeply personal kind of love.

There are many ways to nurture our faith through spiritual disciplines. One practice that I have found most helpful for stilling my mind and settling my spirit is through music. Martin Luther once said: "Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us." Luther does not specify what kind of music. All music can inspire.

Action: Spend some time in your day to really engross yourself in a piece of music. Whether it be classical, jazz, or Christian rock. Allow the music to calm you. Allow your mind to become uninhibited. Read a passage from the Bible and reflect on it and let yourself be carried away. For other ideas, read: *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, Marjorie Thompson

Mind/Mental

If you are like me, your mind is always running. Thoughts flit through our minds at an alarming rate each day and can even keep us up at night. Our racing thoughts can create inner turmoil, anxiety, and even depression. With busy minds, we have little time to think of holy things. But we need time to slow our minds down to make room for God and replenish our faith.

During a particularly dry period in my life, someone reminded me of the importance of the practice of being present or mindfulness. Mindfulness is the ability to be present to the moment at hand and not let other thoughts (anxieties, regrets, anticipation which can cause distress) dominate your mind. Being present is a form of meditation where we take time to breathe, pray, and listen for God.

Action: One method for nurturing our faith is through an ancient Christian

prayer practice call “breath prayer.” Breath prayer involves repeating a mantra to the rhythm of your breathing. You can begin with simply repeating God’s name Yahweh. Breathe in to **Yah** and breathe out saying **weh**. Other mantras include: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”; “Be still and know that I am God” or you can always create your own prayer to suit your needs.

Strength/Physical

I am not a person who sits still easily. More often than not I find my closest moments with God when I am exercising. As a cyclist, I can go out for hours on my bike and do nothing but think, meditate, and pray. I can have the same experience when I am walking. It is uninterrupted time to focus.

There are several reasons why physical activity can help nurture our faith. Physical activity releases endorphins in the brain, which promote the feeling of well-being; it can help regulate our breathing to a rhythm, which can bring calm and focus our minds. The Bible tells us that our bodies are the temple of God. Physical activity improves our overall health so that we can serve God to the best of our abilities.

Action: Make a point of engaging in some sort of physical activity for 30 minutes a day or three 10-minute

Let's face it; the challenges of day-to-day life can chip away at our spiritual foundation.

periods per day (walking, gardening, mowing the lawn, vacuuming, yoga). Use that time to give thanks to God for the abilities you have been given.

Neighbour/Communal

Healthy spirituality and faith development involves reaching beyond the self. God made us for community. The church is the centre of Christian community. In his book *One Step at a Time: A Pilgrim's Guide to Spirit-led Living*, Timothy Geoffrion writes: "...without Christian community we simply cannot experience the fullness of life God intends for us, and we will limit our spiritual growth and miss out on important aspects of Spirit-led living. We are inseparably linked to each other. None of us is so wise or enlightened that we cannot learn from others" (223–224).

Action: Think of a time when you were not a part of a community. How did it feel? Think of a time when you felt like you belonged. What are the differences? How can you



welcome the stranger and make your community open to others? How does your faith grow in community? Make a conscious effort to extend hospitality this week.

Self/Personal

When Jesus said "love your neighbour as yourself" what he meant was love your neighbour as *you love* yourself. So many people today do not show self-love in the way they live; but this goes against God's plan for us. The Bible tells us "We love because (God) first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

How does self-love nurture our faith? First, self-love allows us to see

ourselves as God sees us. We come to accept that despite our weaknesses God sees us as His beloved creation. Secondly, loving ourselves unconditionally helps us to see others through a similar lens. We become less critical and more understanding. Thirdly, loving ourselves helps motivate us toward healthy growth and change.

Action: Morning Prayer:

Loving God,
Help me to see that I am your
beloved;
to know that I am fearfully and
wonderfully made;

Practical actions for holistic
faith:

- Heart/Emotional
- Soul/Spiritual
- Mind/Mental
- Strength/Physical
- Neighbour/Communal
- Self/Personal

created in your image and
likeness.

Remind me every day that I have
been made for a purpose.

Your Spirit resides in me.

You have planted goodness in my
heart.

Help me to accept your
unconditional love,
and love myself so I can be
free to love others. Amen

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The Rev. Dr. Heather Vais serves with her husband, the Rev. Tom Vais, as the Ministry Team at Thornhill Presbyterian Church. Her service to the broader church includes positions on boards and committees of the denomination, as well as serving as the moderator of the Presbytery of Oak Ridges and the chair of the Business Committee. In her spare time, Heather enjoys cycling, long walks with the dog, photography, reading, and time spent at the cottage with family.



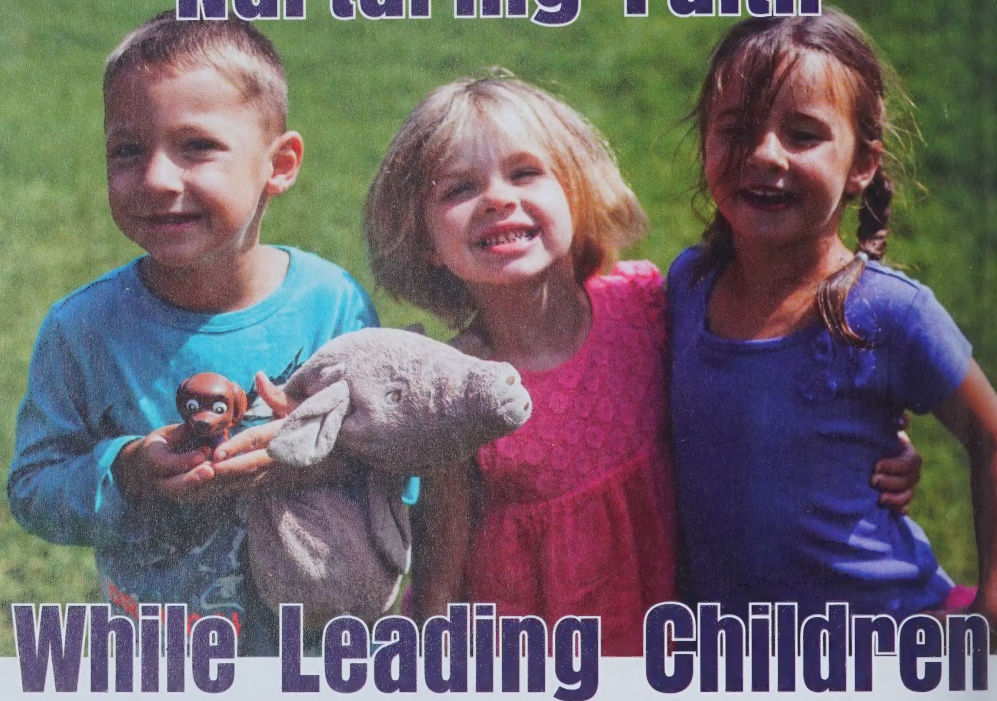
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Nurturing Faith



While Leading Children

Thoughts from Rev. Theresa McDonald-Lee and Rev. Becky Roushorne-Lau

by Judith Farris

Parents, pastors, camp staff, Sunday school teachers, and other caring adults work hard to offer meaningful faith-building experiences for children. This month, I spoke with two Presbyterian women about their suggestions for nurturing your own faith while leading children's ministry: the Rev. Theresa McDonald-Lee, a Co-Executive Director of Camp Kintail, and the Rev. Becky Roushorne-Lau, Minister of St. Giles

Presbyterian Church in Sarnia.

Part of shaping children's spiritual practices is to shape our own. McDonald-Lee's daily practice is to keep a gratitude and prayer journal in which she gives thanks for specific gifts and moments. A spiritual practice she began three years ago is to memorize Psalms, which began out of her desire "to have those words accessible to me." She talks more about both practices on Matthew

Brough's Spirituality for Ordinary People podcast, "Spiritual Practices For Kids and Families with Rev. Theresa McDonald-Lee" (Posted on April 4, 2017).

The practice of memorizing Psalms has connected her with children in unexpected ways. Her children will hold a Bible and follow along to help her learn the words, and she recites Psalms to them if they have trouble sleeping. These experiences have allowed her to share this practice with her children, so that it is "not a silo" to retreat into as a solitary individual, but a point of connection for herself, her children, and the words of scripture.

In staff training sessions at Camp Kintail, McDonald-Lee encourages sharing Bible stories and spiritual practices with campers. She teaches staff to treat Faith, Learning, and Sharing ("FLASH") sessions as opportunities to open their hearts and learn *with* children, rather than have an attitude of providing an experience *for* children, advice which applies to anyone working in children's ministry in other forms. Staff often tell her that they learn from children's comments and questions, which give new and fresh perspectives on familiar stories. McDonald-Lee offered this encouragement to children's ministry workers in churches: "Sharing the stories of Jesus is one of the most important things we do. It is a sacred trust that has been given to us."

Finding a wider perspective about the importance of childhood experiences in a life of faith can help teachers understand the great value of teaching ministry and renewing their commitment to this ministry. McDonald-Lee acknowledged that in many churches, Sunday school teachers are missing their church's worship service in order to teach, which means they may be missing teaching, prayer, and worship that would nurture their own faith.

She spoke with gratitude of her own childhood memories of Sunday school and how teachers would make her feel special. She told how one teacher led a "grown-up" craft one year and another teacher allowed her to "be the flannelgraph board" when she wore a fuzzy sweater, moving the story figures on this sweater one Sunday morning. The warm relationships that can develop between children and caring adults in the church (other than their parents!) are significant in the faith formation of children. She values having other adults in the church share their stories of faith with her children.

Roushorne-Lau concurs that it is important to have many adults "lean in" and help teach children about living a life of faith. She encourages caring adults to share personal stories of faith with children: "It is very moving to hear how God has worked in the lives of people they know." She said that the gospels show us that



“Jesus wanted to connect with us so much,” and that even after his disciples deserted him, Jesus did not return to them bearing a grudge. Rather, “Jesus made himself known and accepted them back.” Even after separating ourselves from God for a period of time, whether days, weeks, or years, “it matters that you come back.”

Roushorne-Lau suggests learning about a life of faith alongside children, assuring children that God hears their prayers and that their daily lives are significant—what they do and who they are is of great value to God. She makes a habit of beginning each day with a devotional time, reading scripture and praying. Most of these morning experiences are ordinary—“mountaintop moments” are few during this simple practice, but the repeated practice of reading and praying maintains a rhythm of connection with God and frames each

day with the bigger story of scripture, making daily work meaningful. It helps to sustain her awareness of the nearness of God: “God is present in every moment.”

Household tasks, such as kneading bread dough or folding laundry become acts of service and a way of practising “our upside-down way of looking at the world.” Such acts of service can be a gift to others, and a means of worshiping God. Seemingly small acts of creation, such as crocheting, can be a way to bear “the image of a creative God. (Read Andy Crouch’s *Culture Making* for more thoughts about the connection between creativity and following Christ.)

Creativity will also be required as churches face changes in the coming years. The current models for children’s ministry and Sunday school may change. McDonald-Lee

referred to “Messy Church,” a form of worship that brings people of different ages together, and to the Camp Kintail Speaker Series, held on May 23, 2017, in which the Rev. Theresa Cho spoke about intergenerational worship. In Cho’s home congregation, St. John’s Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, California, great effort has gone into building meaningful, intergenerational worship on Sunday mornings. St. John’s offers some separate programming for children on Sundays, but the focus is on being together as families and with people at various stages of life, and on making this time matter.

Regardless of the form the ministry takes, faith nurture has some common threads. Through sharing scripture, prayer, and worship, we can

find renewal and inspiration for each new day. Roushorne-Lau said that people, who have been involved in ministry of various sorts may feel that they have done their time, but, “If you are still breathing, God has a plan involving you somehow.” By God’s strength, we can follow in these plans.

Judith Farris is a member of Paterson Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sarnia, Ontario, where she lives with her family. She is a member of the Camp Kintail board.



The Quiet Room

by Audrey Cameron



I had to move my classroom the week before Christmas. As the Resource Teacher in a Middle School, moving my classroom was like doing a kitchen renovation. Cupboards were filled with books and gadgets. Drawers and trolleys were filled with resources for reading and regulation.

From the beginning, it was not the work of the move that I worried about. Rather it was leaving my big beautiful room, filled with light and space, for a smaller room at the end of the hall.

How would everything fit? And even more so, how would I recreate the space I had for students who needed a 'time away' from the challenges placed by academics and people. In my big classroom, a corner was known as a space where you could go and be alone. Defined by a gym mat, its purpose and function were important to me and the students.

"You can have both spaces at the end of the hall if you want," were the problem-solving words of my principal.

And so it happened. One room moved to two rooms, a Resource Center and another room, a break out room equipped with random items, such as mats and Lego (and so much more) to encourage the students entrusted to me to take time to quiet their brains and emotions when needed.

Because my creativity was not engaged on the first day in my new room, I called the side room, "The Quiet Room." It has stuck. And, it is lovely. I work with students who struggle. It is not their fault. Their life stories, by birth or circumstance, mean that they need to work hard to focus and regulate their emotions. Some find it hard to process, whether it be for reading or social interactions. Others come to school tired and hungry. The Quiet Room becomes the space where they can have a

snack or a nap, work quietly on their assignment, or create a master piece from magnets and clay. On some days, the room is not used. On other days, it is a busy gentle place.

One afternoon, as I was sitting at my desk near the end of the day, enjoying the new space, the Quiet Room, and the rare moment of being alone. I did not expect this to be the moment that I would be taught. A student came running into the room. He is a frequent sight in the Resource Centre. He comes for regular breaks and also for academic work. His story is big. He is an artist. For this student, when he needs to quiet his brain or control his thoughts, he sits with clay or fine tip markers and creates beautiful, intricate masterpieces. Most days, this happens like clockwork. Other days, like this day, he cannot find the tools to settle his mind and heart. I was spent. It had been a challenging day and with ten minutes until the final bell, I could not think of anything that might be helpful.

"Why not take your markers and paper to the Quiet Room? I think it would be good to have some alone time."

He reluctantly agreed. A young upset little boy entered the room and ten short minutes later he emerged as a strong teacher. I was his student.

"I am sorry, Ms. Cameron, if I had said anything that I shouldn't have.

Thanks for letting me have some time to be quiet. By the way, I will do anything for you."

He left the room as the final bell rang and I wiped the tears for what I had witnessed. I learned, or relearned if truth were told, a valuable lesson that I had forgotten. Some quiet time, doing what we love, and being apart from any other influence can calm the soul and open the heart more than any other thing in the world. I left school that day determined to find my own Quiet Room.

I need time in my day and week where my mind is still and my heart is open to hear God speak. In the stillness, I know God speaks words of comfort and correction. In the stillness, I am reminded that I am a Beloved Child of the One who loves best. In the quiet, my eyes are open to who I am and where my gifts are needed in this world, my



vocation. St. Teresa of Avila said: "Close your eyes and follow your breath to the still place that leads to the invisible path that leads you home." Scriptures tells us to be still and take long, loving looks at God.

My peace and contentment come from time spent with God. I do this in community. I need the other for their words of insight and wisdom. I need the testimony of their story to encourage mine. I need the wisdom of insight and the interpretation of the word from others.

But there is also a deep need in me to spend time with God, alone. I do this with scripture and music, in prayer. I do this with intentional study of His story. But I do it in other ways too. This past week, I have walked in the woods. I have driven along a winding road and said my prayers aloud. I have tasted the bread and drank the wine and remembered the sacrifice He made for me. I have planted a seedling and I have played a game of backgammon against the computer. I have done all this in the "Quiet Room" of my heart, where the conversation is deeper than words and



the peace is beyond understanding.

I find myself emerging from this space, announcing to my Lord, as my young friend taught me, "If I have done anything I should not have done, I am sorry. Thanks for letting me have some quiet. I will do anything for you."

I am so grateful for young teachers and winding roads, and the Quiet Room of my heart where I find myself in the company of the Beloved.



**GOD
IS IN
CONTROL!**

Embracing New Seasons

by Anne Miller

I was so excited to go to school for a Master's degree to prepare me to be a Christian Educator. Growing up, kids and youth had always been part of my week somehow. It was hard

to imagine doing anything different. Leading and serving on committees and catching a vision for new ministries that I helped to implement were always experiences I loved.

Clearly this was where my gifts were meant to be used. I owed it to God, and to all those who had invested in me, to live out this calling.

So when the last congregation that hired me to work with kids, youth, and families deemed that they couldn't afford me anymore and I had three months' notice to find something else, I was stunned. I knew that money was tight, but I had hoped that something could be worked out so that I could continue on. It was not to be, and by the end of those three months, no similar position had materialized. When concerned people asked, I kept telling them that I was going to be okay and God was good. Meanwhile, I was often shaking in my boots.

I had never been in this position before—applying for EI and dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency. I was attending workshops at the employment centre and I did not have a clue when a permanent job would come along. All the time, I was trying to hold onto the faith that God would look out for me. I questioned a lot—my initial calling, my capabilities, my identity, my purpose.

Also, when I was completely honest with myself, I knew that I was burned out. While I was sad to be finished, there was a bit of relief too. And while I would have loved the security of landing a new position right away, I was not ready. In hindsight, I see the fingerprints

of God in allowing me the time to rest, while still providing me with opportunities to serve. There were a lot of “coincidences.” People I knew from a congregation where I had done pulpit supply in the past, showed up at a concert where I was. This ‘coincidence’ led to me preaching there at least once a month. Also, the minister at my church happened to be an Interim Moderator at another congregation. She asked me to preach there and this has turned into a stated supply position. I am blessed that this congregation has embraced me as a lay worship leader.

When I look back, I see God's intent. God has allowed me to heal through the gentle nurturing of others, and that has carried me through this dark time. Where I thought I would be a youth worker forever, I now love the opportunity to preach and write. I also love encouraging children and youth ministry volunteers, who are just starting out or needing encouragement to continue. With the cuts to both regional staff and congregational Christian education positions, I pray that God can use me to support the many volunteers, who are carrying out this crucial work.

I had to embrace a change, a change that I didn't want at first. I had to recognize that I was at a different stage of life. I used to think nothing of sleeping on a church floor to chaperon a PYPS event, and I had tons of energy to lead a youth group

each week. Now I'm happy to have the challenge of writing a blog and curriculum for leaders to use. I'm still me, but how God is using me has shifted. I've had to let go and celebrate the different seasons of my life so far. Some things have gone to make space for the new ways that I have been equipped to serve.

Right now, the church seems to be full of anxiety and angst at every turn. It's scary to think about closing congregations and long-standing groups. It can make us feel guilt, frustration, anger, and even shame that we are no longer carrying on as we once did. Post-Christendom and Post-modernism have dramatically changed our cultural landscape and that is a huge loss to navigate as well as an enormous opportunity for the church.

But no matter our corporate and personal losses, we are still us. We are still the same people beautifully created by God for a purpose, with gifts and skills and wisdom and stories to share. We may have less energy, even less mobility and health. We may have put in so much time that we are feeling burned out. But God can take us and restore our souls and show us the next step forward as we trust in our Creator's goodness and faithfulness.

**I hope and pray
that I will never
stop trusting in
God's purposes
and plans for me**

The congregation where I currently preach has many members in their 90s and beyond. They are all remarkable people who may think that they contribute little. But I would challenge that and say that their witness offers so much and inspires me in my Christian walk every single week. Just their presence is powerful and their words and faith bring me incredible joy.

I hope and pray that I will never stop trusting in God's purposes and plans for me, and that no matter how my body and my mind changes, that my spirit will stay supple and reliant on God. I pray that as seasons come and go, I will learn to adapt with grace and to care for and value myself at each stage.

May we celebrate and embrace that God always has something for us to offer others that is needed to build Christ's kingdom. Thanks be to God for the continuing journey.

Anne Miller grew up in The Presbyterian Church in Canada and still calls it home. Anne has served the church for over 20 years in a variety of capacities with children, youth, and families. She is a lay worship leader, workshop and event facilitator, and published freelance writer of curriculum, articles, and other resources.



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IT'S TIME FOR JUSTICE

International Affairs Committee

"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind (Lk. 14:13-14)." The healing and liberating work of Jesus restored excluded people to communities from which they were marginalized.

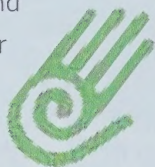
People with Disabilities

There are a billion people with disabilities—it is the world's largest minority group. The World Health Organization defines "disabilities" as, "an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations" (World Health Organization). These may be physical, mental or psychological in nature.

The challenges facing people with disabilities from participating in society are varied. They may include physical barriers that prevent accessibility in



public spaces, workplaces and modes of transportation; barriers to information and communication, such as lack of sign language interpretation or Braille, easy-to-read formats and written information; or institutional barriers such as not linking disability benefits to the inability to work. Social barriers may include attitudes, misconceptions or discrimination about the rights and abilities of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty and social isolation, be excluded from education or employment, or face barriers to accessing public services. In the Global South, these problems are even greater.



The Church Responds

The Presbyterian Church of Ghana supports programs for people with disabilities. One such program is the Garu Community Based Rehabilitation Centre (CBR), which has worked with 134,000 people with disability since 1995. Founded as a farming program for the visually impaired, CBR's life and vocational skills programs now include people with other types of disabilities as well. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, through PWS&D, supports this important ministry. Stories from Garu are on PWS&D's website and Mission Blogs offer reflections from Presbyterians who have visited Garu on mission trips. These are found online at presbyterian.ca.



Prayer

Creator God, help us to see and embrace difference in gifts and abilities and come to know all people as beloved children of God. Amen.

The International Affairs Committee is mandated by General Assembly to monitor and draw the church's attention to international issues. The full report is found in the 2017 Acts & Proceedings.



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Bible and the

by Dorcas and Noel Gordon



Opening Prayer:

Give us the courage to expose evil thoughts and deeds, and to speak the truth. We do not believe in the right of the strong, the strength of armies, or the power of oppression. We believe in the equal value of all people, the power of nonviolence, and solidarity based on justice.

Excerpt from the Prayer of the 9th Conference of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre¹

Scripture:

Micah 6: 8 “God has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

The background to this verse is found earlier in chapter 6 where the prophet Micah sets up God’s challenge to the Hebrew people as if in a courtroom. The mountains and hills are the jury. God speaks first reminding them of all that has been done for them. God asks “what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you (verse 3)? The people respond asking what it is that God requires of them. Is it burnt offerings? Is it the sacrifice of their firstborn? The response is found in the verse above: to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with God.

What does that mean for us who seek to live as

This is the third of four studies on the Land of Palestine. The first study can be found in the November/December 2017 and the second in the January/February 2018 issues of *Glad Tidings*.

Land of PALESTINE

disciples today? What is our definition of what God requires of us? How does justice relate to Sabbath observance? How does justice, kindness and walking humbly with God translate into our daily life as Christ followers?

Luke 4:16–30

In this passage Luke sets out his understanding of Jesus' mission. When the scroll is given to Jesus in the synagogue, the passage that is opened is that of Isaiah 61. The interesting thing is that Luke doesn't quote Isaiah exactly but what he does quote leaves no doubt as to the focus of Jesus' ministry. It will be about an inclusive understanding of God's covenant love; it will be about privileging the poor, release to those in captivity, sight to the blind and freedom for the oppressed. It is about living the year of Jubilee, every fiftieth year when debts are to be cancelled, slaves to be given freedom and the land to lie fallow.

When Luke has Jesus draw out the implications of this passage for the lives of those in Nazareth in the 1st century the response is to get rid of him. No





one could countenance such an inclusive covenant yet, says Luke, this is precisely what Jesus came to proclaim.

How do we understand “inclusive covenant” in our Christian witness? What does it mean for our partnership with the Palestinian people, Christian and Muslim, as well as for our Jewish brothers and sisters?

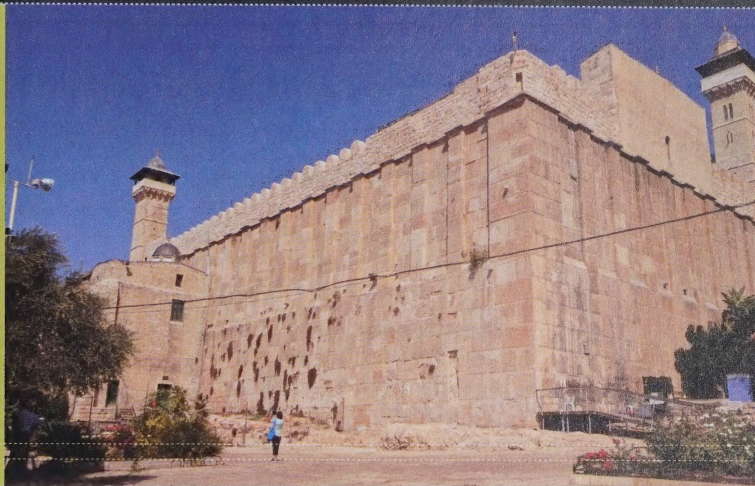
Interpreting the Bible in our time and context:

A Subordinate Standard of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith*, Chapter 5 addresses what Presbyterians believe about the biblical witness. It begins with the statement that the Bible is “given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. It is to be the standard of all doctrine.” It ends by stating that the Bible “is to be understood in the light of the revelation of God’s work in Christ,” and continues by affirming that it is “conditioned by

Living Faith

Chapter 5: The Bible

5.1 The Bible has been given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. It is to be the standard of all doctrine by which we must test any word that comes to us from church, world, or inner experience. We subject to its judgment all we believe and do. Through the Scriptures the church is bound only to Jesus Christ its King and Head. He is the living Word of God to whom the written word bears witness.



the language, thought, and setting of its time,” concluding with the exhortation that we, equally conditioned by the language, thought and setting of our time, are “relying on the Holy Spirit” to “seek the application of God’s word for our time.”

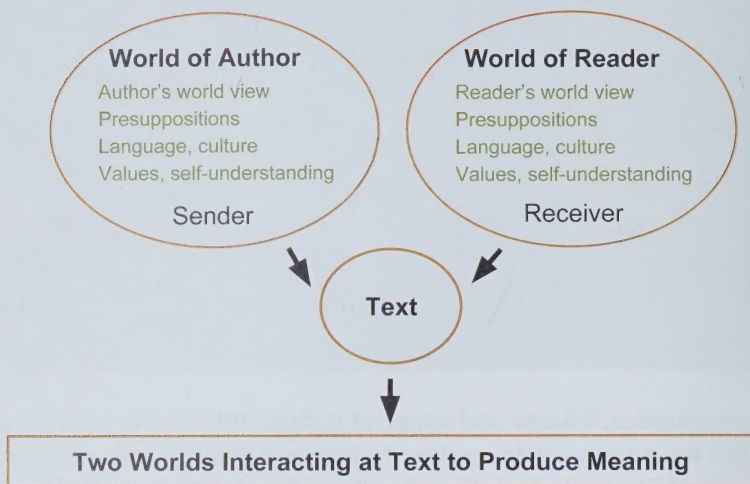
For Christians of the Reformed tradition the Bible is central to our self-understanding and sets the standard as to how we live out our discipleship. So pivotal is our interpretation of the Bible to faithful living that, over the centuries, how we interpret the Bible in any particular context has often been a site of great struggle and controversy within the church. In no case is this truer than in claims made to the land of Palestine.

An Interpretive Framework²

Every reading of the biblical text is an interpretation, in that what the text means for us combines some understanding of the world of the author—his/her social,

5.4 The Bible is to be understood in the light of the revelation of God’s work in Christ. The writing of the Bible was conditioned by the language, thought, and setting of its time. The Bible must be read in its historical context. We interpret Scripture as we compare passages, seeing the two Testaments in light of each other, and listening to commentators, past and present. Relying on the Holy Spirit we seek the application of God’s word for our time.

INTERACTING WITH THE BIBLICAL TEXT



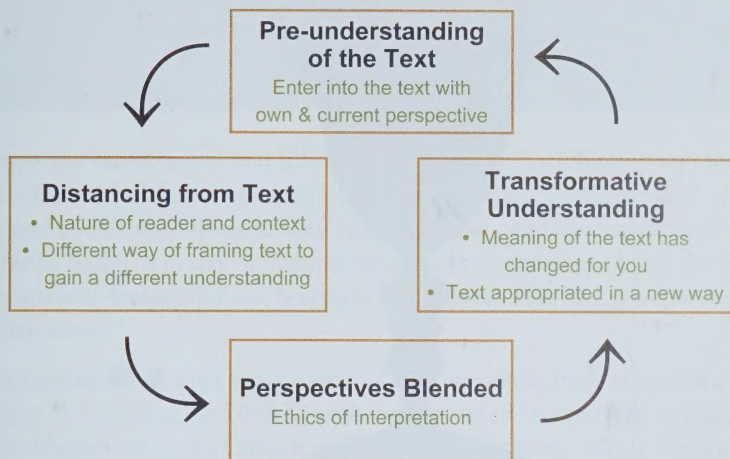
economic, and political context—and something of the values and culture from our own context. No reader of scripture can move outside their particular socialization to read the text in a “pure” way. Nor can we ever know exactly the intent of the biblical author given the differences between their social context and ours. We seek absolute truth in scripture but such truth belongs to God. We “see in a mirror dimly (or “in a riddle”) but then we will see face to face” (1 Cor. 13: 12). Now we know only in part and need to recognize the perspectival nature of our interaction with scripture.

Throughout our lifetime, we have already formed an understanding of what the bible means through hearing the scriptures read, listening to sermons, or as a child attending church school. So strong is this pre-understanding of the text that only when we come up against an interpretation that from our experience seems incorrect or limited do we ask questions. It is at this point that we need to distance ourselves from that pre-understanding and find a different way of framing the text in order to gain a new understanding of its meaning. This means asking new questions of the text.

This is precisely the work that many Christians have undertaken in the past 50 years. Those in Latin America have approached the text asking

INTERACTING WITH THE BIBLICAL TEXT

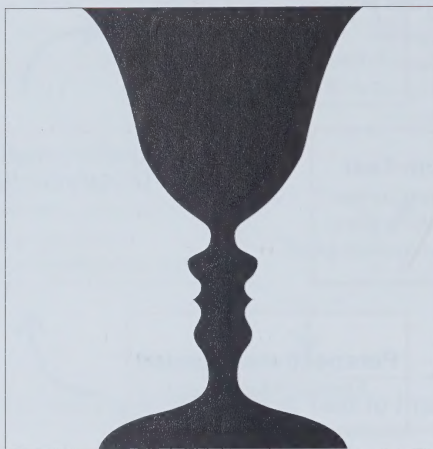
Approach to Learning Scripture



questions from the perspective of “God’s preferential option for the poor.” Women have read the texts in a way that seeks to put women back in the biblical story and have been surprised as to how much the pre-understanding they received neglected the stories of those women who were leaders among the Hebrew people and in the early church. More recent readings seek to de-colonialize the text. For example, the whole of the New Testament was written by subjected people, people under the thumb of the Roman Empire. Such readings look at the cultural and political situation of that time and new understandings of the early church have emerged.

Like the picture on page 30 in which we can see both a vase and two faces³ there can be different ways of reading scripture depending on the lens we use. These frameworks invite us to bring our pre-understanding and new frameworks into dialogue to arrive at new meaning, which then undertakes the same process again and again. This form of reading requires us to put our interpretation of scripture through an ethical lens. In other words, how we frame our reading becomes critical. If we start from the perspective that God is a God of peace and justice or that God requires us to “love God and our neighbour as ourselves” then any interpretations which deny this should be set aside as invalid.

What's the Truth?
PHOTOGRAPHIC AMBIGUITY
Two Faces or a Vase?



The Picture is Constant—The Truth of the Picture is that Both Two Faces and a Vase Exist in the Picture

Reading the Biblical text in the context of Palestine:

How we read and interpret the Biblical witness about the land of Palestine presents two very different perspectives. It is a hermeneutical exercise that can have deadly implications. An exclusivist view claims that God gave the land to Abraham and his descendants, meaning Isaac and his descendants (Genesis 13: 15) and that the modern Jewish state is the heir to that promise.

This text and others⁴ are used by Zionist ideology—both Jewish and Christian—to claim that the Bible is a deed bestowing to the Jews divine right to the land and thus the Palestinians must leave the land.⁵ With this reading of the Old Testament the program of the Jewish settlers and the Israeli government and its military to make life unbearable for the Palestinians is justified.

As early as 1942 Rabbi Samuel Goldenson preached a sermon stating that Judaism does not fare well at the hands of Zionism. He states: “For in order to find support in Judaism for its nationalist philosophy, Zionism necessarily tends

"God has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

to stress the racial, tribal and folkish elements of Jewish history and thought..." He continues, All historical religions are composites. In the passage of time men [sic] and events contribute to such religions many and diverse elements.... The danger to Judaism in the Zionist doctrines is in its emphasis upon the earlier and narrower features of our heritage, the features that lead to separation and exclusiveness.⁶

Our experiences of such separation and exclusiveness have occurred a number of times in Palestine. In 2008 Dorcas accompanied an interfaith group, hosted by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, to Hebron. While there the group visited the information centre of the settlement, Kiryat Arba. The settlement spokesperson addressed us and then invited questions. When asked what he saw as the solution to the Israel/Palestine situation, he replied that he was in favour of a one state solution. Surprised, we asked what he thought that would look like. The response: one state for the Jews. What about the Palestinians we asked? "... let them drown in the sea for all I care." His response was met with absolute silence by the ministers, rabbis, imams, and others who were in attendance.

Just across the street above this information centre is a primary school, Cordoba School, attended by Palestinian children. Each day, twice a day these young children and their teachers are forced to go through a military check-point, sometimes without difficulty, but many times having their school bags searched, often mocked and even threatened by settlers who stand nearby. When Noel was a EAPPI volunteer in Hebron in 2009, one of his responsibilities was to be at this checkpoint, Checkpoint 56, twice each day to monitor the treatment of these children and teachers.

Hebron is a city south of Bethlehem where the tomb of Abraham and Sarah is found. It claims the original tree of Mamre under which Abraham sat when the angels announced the birth of Isaac. It is one of the oldest cities in the world. More recently it has been a divided city. In 1968 a group of Jews went there ostensibly to celebrate Passover and refused to leave. They were joined by others and now Hebron houses approximately 650–800 of Israel's most violent settlers⁷ with 1500 Israeli troops to protect them, making it the most heavily occupied

“Christian Zionism as a doctrinal stance is inconsistent with Reformed doctrine and its emphasis on one covenant of grace for all peoples”

138th General Assembly

city in the West Bank. Palestinians were forcibly removed from this part of the city. Their homes and shops were welded shut and they were forbidden to travel on any of the roads near this Jewish settlement. It is a city of approximately 107 checkpoints like the one we have described above.

Rabbi Goldenson ended his sermon by concluding that it is these tribal ways of exclusion and separation that are causing Jews and the world at large its greatest suffering to the neglect of the higher and nobler teachings that are part of every creed and faith.⁸ His words echo the approach to interpreting the scriptures set out above. It is a matter of prioritizing the higher and nobler teachings that we adhere to as central to our faith and discipleship.

Another form of Zionism, Christian Zionism, also supports an exclusivist interpretation of the land. An example of how this is constructed in the rhetoric of Christian Zionism reads like this: Referring to verses like Genesis 13:15 and 2 Chronicles 20:7 (“Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham?”) Christian Zionism would affirm: This is a permanent possession given by God to Abraham, and all of this territory is the land of Israel. There is no such thing as a Palestine state nor has there ever been...If we ally ourselves with the enemies of Israel, we will be standing against God Almighty.⁹

Given their reading of biblical prophecy, not only do Christian Zionists support Israel’s claim to the whole land of Palestine, including Jerusalem, they also encourage the establishment of settlements on Palestinian land and the rejection of any peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. President Trump’s ill-advised decision in December to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel was greeted as a great triumph by Christian Zionists. Disregarding international law, which has maintained that any decision on the city of Jerusalem must be part of a peace process, Trump’s has made a unilateral decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem.

At the 138th General Assembly, The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)



photo: Old City of Jerusalem

All photos have been provided by the author or The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society. They are from previous participants of study tours to the Middle East.

defined Christian Zionism and passed a recommendation that rejected “Christian Zionism as a doctrinal stance is inconsistent with Reformed doctrine and its emphasis on one covenant of grace for all peoples.” The Assembly also acknowledged “that Christian Zionism poses a significant obstacle to a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians.”¹⁰

Whether Jewish Zionist or Christian Zionist, such interpretations are decidedly dangerous, in that many Palestinian people have been and continue to be killed and oppressed by the way the Bible is being used and interpreted.¹¹ Not only dangerous but such interpretations are one-sided for a number of reasons. First, they fail to recognize that both Isaac (claimed by Jews) and Ishmael (claimed by Muslims) are Abraham’s descendants.¹² Second, such interpretations fail to recognize the many inclusive claims in the Bible, i.e. God’s inclusion of other nations in this promise.¹³ Even more they fail to recognize that the biblical story is told from the perspective of one people called by God to be a holy nation. It does not mean that God loves other nations less—it simply means their stories are only told from the perspective of the Hebrew story, which we refer to as the Old Testament. What is particularly disturbing is that the story we do have in the Old Testament often affirms violence and destruction against those outside the covenant as the will of God (Deuteronomy 20:16–18; Joshua 6: 1–21).

There is a strong argument for a different understanding of the land. This understanding speaks of the land as belonging to God. Although it is found in earlier texts (Leviticus 25:23b “the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants”), it is after the Exile that a more inclusive theology of the land starts to emerge, a theology in which there is no command to drive out or annihilate, but a command to share the land with those who also inhabit it.



Arthur Waskow, a Jewish theologian, seeking to identify another way of looking at God's promise to Abraham, calls it the land twice-promised. He describes it in these words "the Jews have returned to govern their ancient homeland, only to find that another people – the Palestinians – lives in that same land." By way of seeking an answer to the fact that two people, "each with the certainty that God or history tied its destiny to this land between the Jordan and the sea", he returns to the ancient texts, reading there the "struggles between Abraham's two wives and their two sons as a prototype of the struggle between Jews and Arabs."¹⁴ He goes on to ask, why God would promise the same land twice to two different people. His conclusion is "...precisely because the earth has no rigid 'natural' boundaries between the lands and peoples, every people must learn to share the earth with other peoples. So the vanguard people¹⁵ must learn to share its land with another people."¹⁶

The most explicit example for Christians of an inclusive theology of the land is Luke's narration of Jesus' visit to the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth (Luke 4: 14–30). By citing the examples of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (a Lebanese woman¹⁷) and that of the curing of Namaan the Syrian general, Luke understands Jesus as one breaking down the theology of covenant exclusiveness and extending it to include the Gentiles. The result is that the congregation who gathered that day to hear Jesus preach try to throw him off a cliff.

In a document written in 2006, *The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism*,



Photo: Haifa – a city where Israelis and Arabs live together in peaceful coexistence.

Palestinian Christians “categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation.”¹⁸ In this document they set out the lens by which they read scripture. Not only do they reject an interpretation of the land from an exclusivist perspective but they name justice as the lens through which they read the biblical text. Here they explicitly name ways in which Christian Zionism is contributing to violence in the Middle East, calling upon its supporters to work for reconciliation now instead of focusing on a world yet to come. The document also contains a statement as to the principles that Palestinian Christians affirm. These include among others:

“We affirm that all people are created in the image of God. In turn they are called to honor the dignity of every human being and to respect their inalienable rights. We affirm that Israelis and Palestinians are capable of living together within peace, justice, and security. We affirm that Palestinians are one people, both Muslim and Christian. We reject all attempts to subvert and fragment their unity. We call upon all people to reject the narrow world view of Christian Zionism and other ideologies that privilege one people at the expense of others.

We are committed to non-violent resistance as the most effective means to end the illegal occupation in order to attain a just and lasting peace. With urgency, we warn that Christian Zionism and its alliances are justifying colonization, apartheid and empire-building. God demands that justice be done. No enduring peace, security, or reconciliation is possible without the foundation of justice. The demands of justice will not disappear. The



Bahai Gardens in Haifa

struggle for justice must be pursued diligently and persistently but non-violently. "What does the Lord require of you, to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

This is where we take our stand. We stand for justice. We can do no other. Justice alone guarantees a peace that will lead to reconciliation with a life of security and prosperity for all the peoples of our Land. By standing on the side of justice, we open ourselves to the work of peace - and working for peace makes us children of God."¹⁹

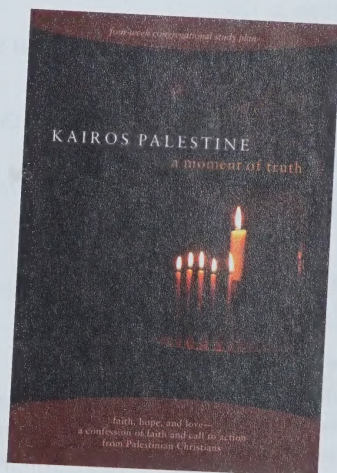
Reading the Bible from the Perspective of Justice and Peace

In *The Bible and the Palestine Israel Conflict*, Yohanna Katanacho states,

One bad biblical interpreter could be more dangerous than one hundred terrorists. We have an Arabic proverb that says one foolish person drops a stone in a well and one hundred wise people cannot get it out. It is easier to destroy or to confuse than to build or clarify, and this is exactly our experience as Palestinian followers of Jesus.²⁰

Considering this statement, Palestinian Christians have been reading scripture in a way that not only acknowledges their suffering at the hands of the occupiers, but also emphasizes justice, peace, and reconciliation.

The Kairos Document written by the leaders of the Jerusalem churches in 2009 and circulated to the international Christian community cries out to God and to us. The document describes their suffering but indicates a determination to give a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of that suffering.



For Discussion:

1. Examine the three diagrams in this study using them to reflect on your understanding of scripture.
2. Read aloud the words from the Palestinian Christians on Christian Zionism especially their commitments in the face of the support given to the occupation by brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. Read the Kairos document (<http://kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document>), viewing it as a personal cry to you, and ask what your response to its plea might be.

- ¹ Ateek, et al., *The Bible*, p. 301. For more information on Sabeel see footnote 1, study 1.
- ² W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* rev. ed. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pub., 1997), p. 158.
- ³ Rubin Vase: This is one of the most famous optical illusions that exists. Rubin was a psychologist who created this image around 1915 who was interested in the way that images like these play around with our visual perception. <https://hubpages.com/art/Two-Faces-or-a-Vase-10-Simple-but-Wonderful-Optical-Illusions>.
- ⁴ Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21; 17:4–8; Numbers 33:50–53: This text includes the command to “drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you.” Deuteronomy 20:16–18 goes even further commanding that in the lands God is giving to you, you shall not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them.
- ⁵ Ateek, *The Bible*, p. 21.
- ⁶ Ateek, *The Bible*, p. 129.
- ⁷ Issa Amro one of the leaders of “Youth Against Settlements” August 11, 2017.
- ⁸ Ateek, *The Bible*, p. 129.
- ⁹ The 700 Club. “Pat Robertson Warns Against Dividing Jerusalem.” www.cbn.com as quoted in Ateek et al *The Bible*, p. 124.
- ¹⁰ <https://www.presbyterianrecord.ca/2012/06/07/assembly-debates-stance-on-christian-zionism-and-israel-palestine/>
- ¹¹ Ateek, et al., *The Bible*, p. 31.
- ¹² And of course the Christian claim to Abraham through Jesus Christ.
- ¹³ Deuteronomy 2:4–5; 9, 19; Book of Jonah
- ¹⁴ Waskow, *Twice-Promised*, p. 56
- ¹⁵ He defines the Jews as “vanguard people” in this way: “God wanted, wants the Jews to be a holy people, a kingdom of priests—a ‘vanguard people’ you might say. A holy people that teaches by example all the peoples how to be holy peoples.” He continues, “By ‘vanguard’ I mean a body of people that is special only because it is the first in the line of march and takes the brunt of trouble.” p. 57.
- ¹⁶ Waskow, *Twice Promised*, p. 57.
- ¹⁷ Ateek, et al., *The Bible*, pp.31–38, a sermon on Luke 4: 21 preached at the Sabeel 9th International Conference held from November 19–25, 2013 in Jerusalem.
- ¹⁸ <https://electronicintifada.net/content/jerusalem-declaration-christian-zionism/627>
- ¹⁹ file:///C:/Users/dgordon/Downloads/Ch_of_Scotland_report_on_Christian_Zionism_May_07.pdf
- ²⁰ Yohanna Katanacho, “Approaches to the Bible.” *Al-Liqa’ Journal* 37 (2011), 36–41. Also found in Ateek, et al., *The Bible*, “The Occupation of the Bible, p. 59.

Summertime with God

by Colleen Wood

It might not feel like it, but summer is coming. Summer is great, but the difference in routines can sometimes mean our regular faith practices get forgotten. Here are several ways to keep your faith in tact and growing over the summer months:

Travel Prayers

Get in the habit of saying a prayer before you set off for your travels. Whether it is a day at the beach or a flight across the ocean, acknowledge that God goes with you. Pray for safety and God's presence throughout your travels.

This is the simple prayer our family uses:

Dear God, thank you for the time we have to travel together. Be with us and keep us safe. Help us to become closer to one another and to you throughout our travels. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Plant a Prayer Garden

Work with your church or plant your own prayer garden. Unless you are a master gardener, choose native plants that are simple and will work with your environment. (Some cities and towns even offer a free service where they will suggest plants to grow

in your area that require minimal maintenance to thrive.) In addition to plants, consider adding a comfortable place to sit, an inspirational statue or sign, or even a water feature.

For those who don't have a patch of green, perhaps you can even add some 'garden' to your indoor environment. I have a small measuring can on my mantel that contains dried flowers. It just takes a small amount of nature to bring a little more life to my soul.

Once you have your garden, spend time in it. Read your Bible and pray in your garden space.

Create a 'Road-trip' Soundtrack

Put together a playlist of your favourite uplifting music to play in your car. My husband got me a SiriusXM subscription for my birthday and I love listening to the Christian station when I am in the car. I am surprised at how it nurtures and inspires me, even as I face the Toronto traffic!

Some libraries even have free downloads available to get new music for free and you might be surprised at what music is available! We have found a number of Christian artists available through our local library.

Visit a New Church

When you are in the new community, get out on Sunday morning and visit a new church. Look for something completely different from your home church. You might be surprised what moves you in a different worship experience.

Attend a Christian Camp or Conference

Our Presbyterian Church in Canada camps across the country hold special camps for all ages. (Some even have specific camps for children and their grandparents.) Get outside, sing songs around a campfire, and walk along the shoreline. Just as our camps can inspire children and youth in their faith, they can inspire adults too!

Make a Donation

During some of our vacations, we have felt the need to give to the community that we visited. Find a non-profit agency that is working in the community you are visiting. Even 'tourist' destinations have those in need and you can contribute to the economy not only by visiting, but by donating to a worthwhile cause in the community you are visiting.

Choose a New Book to Read this Summer

See the suggestions listed in this

article, and also the many suggestions in the article, *Nurturing Our Faith: Practical Actions for Holistic Spirituality* (p. 4).

Go on a Prayer Walk

Summer is the perfect time to get out and get moving. Go for a walk through your neighbourhood and pray for your neighbours as you walk past their homes. Pray for the children in your neighbourhood as you walk past the park. Pray for the churches in your neighbourhood or any mission in your neighbourhood. Pray for the educators as you pass the school. Pray for your political leaders within your town or city, your province, and our country. Pray for the businesses that serve your community.

Host a Neighborhood Party

Getting to know your neighbours is a great way to share hospitality and make your community a better place. You can plan a simple backyard party with a few drinks and treats and invite just a few close neighbours or you can invite the whole street out for a barbecue (you might want to enlist the help of others if you are inviting the whole street).

Rest

Sometimes summer is perfect for catching up on sleep and rest. If your



schedule has been particularly busy this year, take time this summer to rest. Don't schedule things that are not important and learn to say no.

Volunteer or Stop Volunteering

If you don't usually volunteer with the children's program at your church, now might be a great time to share the load. If you are a usual volunteer, now might be the time to ask for a break. If you make the coffee after worship every Sunday, ask for others to bear the load over the summer. Find new ways to serve in the summer, or if you are the 'usual' person who is at the church all the time, maybe take a break and let others serve over the summer.

Suggestion for Summer Reading:

City of God: Faith in the Street

by Sara Miles

This is a book about a minister who ventures outside the walls of the Church to reach out with God's grace.

Sensible Shoes: A Story about the Spiritual Journey

by Sharon Garlough Brown

A great book about four women on their own spiritual journeys. This book has often been described as part fiction and part spiritual direction.

One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are
by Ann Voskamp

This is a beautiful and poetic book on gratitude.

Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks

by Diana Butler Bass

This book explores gratitude, but it looks at it more as spiritual practice. How do we show gratitude and in that, how do we make the world a better place.

Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again

Paperback – June 12, 2018

by Rachel Held Evans

This book will be available mid-June, but reading the early reviews online I already have it on my calendar to order it for my Kobo for my holiday reading!

Reading the reviews, it sounds like Evans love of the Bible comes through strongly. That being said, like many of us, she is also challenged by parts of the Bible, or at least the interpretations we are sometimes faced with. Overall, reviewers suggest that this book will leave you wanting to read the Bible more, and hopefully provide you with new Biblical insights!



Mission In Action

Winnipeg Inner City Missions Retirement Announcement:

After over 18 years of service, the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin is retiring from her work as the Executive Director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions. Margaret has received many awards for her work, including a Woman of Distinction award, an honorary doctorate from the Vancouver School of Theology, and a Presbyterian Woman of Faith award.

She has walked faithfully with the children, youth, and family of her community and continues to devote time and energy to bring healing and reconciliation between the church and Canada's First Nations and Aboriginal people.

We wish Margaret all the best as she begins this part of her retirement journey. Although she will no longer be the Executive Director of WICM, she will continue to serve as the Minister of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church.

New Executive Director:

Ruth Magnuson has been selected as the new Executive Director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions.

Her career has included teaching from Kindergarten to University levels, serving as Executive Director of a faith-based women's organization, and as an organizational

management consultant. Within the context of her work, she has engaged in topics, such as poverty, homelessness, refugees, violence against women, and commercial sexual exploitation, including trafficking of women and children.

We wish her all the best as she begins her role in this important ministry.

Malawi Vivian Bertrand

They were already singing and dancing when we got out of the car: 40 women in colourful clothing under a tree on a hot day. I wish I could bring you there right now so that you could hear the singing, see the dancing, feel the joy, and experience northern Malawi.

There were four of us—Geoff Zakaib, board member of Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D); our intrepid driver, Norton; the program coordinator, Webster Moyo; and me. We were travelling to rural villages in northern Malawi so that Geoff and I could see first-hand the work of PWS&D.

These women are part of several small groups called 'Self Help Groups' of approximately 15 women, who pool their resources and then loan money out to each other to invest

in income-building activities. On a regular basis, they pay the money back with a low interest rate, and their pool of wealth increases. Because they don't have any collateral, these women would not be able to get a bank loan on their own.

One woman spoke of the chickens that she was able to buy. Now she is selling eggs and recently built a new house. Another woman borrowed money from the group to buy three pigs and another now runs a small grocery store. Another was able to build a new house, and she was very proud of the concrete floors. These women are mostly widows or single women, but they have seen huge changes in their lives over the four years that the project has been running.

PWS&D has helped local partners start women's 'Self-Help Groups' in villages in Malawi by providing the funding for a coordinator, who helps the women with financial literacy and running the groups. The program is run by the Ekwendeni Hospital Aids Program (EHAP), and it has been extremely successful in assisting communities in the region. I was so encouraged to hear about how these women, with the little they had, were able to accomplish so much and improve their lives by working together. These women are strengthening each other and their communities.

This idea isn't new. The Bangladeshi economist who founded the Grameen Bank—Mohammed Yunus—understood the value of helping women in poverty with small business ventures. He began by loaning a small amount of money to a group of women and saw that they were able to pay the money back and improve their lives by working together. Over time, he found that women (when compared to men) were most likely to pay the money back in full and on time. As well, they were more likely to use their profits to improve their children's lives. Yunus found that men were more likely to spend money on themselves, rather than on their families, and they didn't always pay back the money loaned to them. The Grameen Bank has now been running since the 1970s, and still 97% of its funding goes to women (<http://www.grameen.com>).

It is clear in Malawi that women and girls face many, many challenges, such as low school attendance, early marriages, sexual assault, domestic violence, and the list goes on. In many ways, women and girls are the key to poverty reduction in Malawi, and it was very encouraging to see the work done by PWS&D in Malawi.

This article is re-printed from Mission Blogs: <http://pccweb.ca/missionblog/2017/11/25/women-in-malawi/>

In the Society

Presbyterial

Women of the **Huron-Perth** Presbyterial met for their Annual Meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church, Listowel, on February 6—a day of bright sunshine in the midst of a snowy week! The theme for the day was Step Out ... in Faith, in Mission.

The Rev. Don McCallum of Knox, Listowel and Shirley Suggitt, president of the Listowel Britton WMS began the morning program with words of welcome. Then, Presbyterial President Ruth Hart led an opening prayer. Then we set the stage for “stepping out in faith

and mission” by singing the hymn Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You.

Presbyterial Vice President, Willy Drost then provided a meditation in which she encouraged us to have the courage to make the changes necessary to fulfill God’s vision for the world, knowing that He will walk with us and guide us along the way. The WMS Purpose was recited in unison by those present.

Caroline Lapier and Diane Peters from Knox North Easthope led a brief service of remembrance for seven WMS women from the Presbyterial, who had completed

Union Ceremony of the WMS groups from Almonte Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. The ceremony was held at the Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial meeting. Pictured are Vivian Young and Mary Cochran.



their earthly journeys in the past year. This was followed by business matters, including the reading of annual reports, the installation of officers for 2018, and the presentation of a certificate of appreciation to the Monkton WMS group, which disbanded at the end of 2017 after 127 years of service.

Following a delicious lunch, prepared by the Listowel Church women, members of St. Andrew's Stratford WMS began the afternoon program with devotions. The afternoon speaker, Laura Pogson, provided an entertaining and inspiring talk. She assured us that God will equip us for any tasks He calls us to perform and that there

are always opportunities for us to be missionaries in our local settings. She continued by highlighting two projects where her personal call to mission has led her: the DivorceCare support group program in Stratford and her involvement with a program, which manufactures and distributes soya milk to children in North Korea. Her insights into the culture of North Korea were particularly informative.

As a Roll Call, representatives from each of the WMS groups present cited a Bible verse on Hope, Courage, or Faith. Offering was collected and dedicated, and courtesies extended to all those who helped to make the day a success.

From the Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial report in March/April *Glad Tidings*: Irene Nesbitt giving her report.



The meeting closed with the singing of the hymn Come Sing, O Church in Joy and a prayer led by Willy Drost from St. Mary's.

~Diane Peters,

Faith was the theme of the Annual Meeting of the **Waterloo Wellington** Presbyterial WMS on February 26 at Duff's Presbyterian Church, Puslinch, ON.

Dr. Wilma Welsh, President, constituted and opened the meeting and then, the Rev. Jane Swatridge welcomed everyone on behalf of the session and congregation of Duff's Church, and conducted a meaningful opening worship. The Rev. Swatridge's meditation focused on the various ways that our faith has been passed down to us from our parents and others who have influenced us in our lives.

Dr. Tori Smit, Regional Minister for Faith Formation for the CNOB Synod, was our guest speaker. Her stimulating presentation, Please Pass the Faith, outlined best practices for sharing our faith with our children, grandchildren, and other young people whom we may influence in various ways. Through prayer, family traditions, modelling our faith, sharing meaningful time and conversation, and above all by providing on-going love and support, we can plant the seeds of faith. In the end, it is God who will bring the growth!

Helen Cleghorn, Treasurer, gave

the financial report and Marion Hunter, Adult Secretary, reported that there are presently 85 active members and 50 associate members in the Waterloo Wellington Presbyterial. Some of their many activities include leading worship services in nursing homes, providing care packages to post-secondary students, supporting mission projects in Africa and Central America, and knitting and packing preemie caps and pneumonia prevention vests for hospitals and clinics in the Bhil area of India.

Dr. Smit installed the Presbyterial officers for 2018 and Dr. Welsh closed the meeting with prayer.

At **Paris** Presbyterial, the Embro Vacation Bible School received a special acknowledgement. It was stated that WMS members are leaders of the crafts, games, Bible cinema, and snacks, and they act as mothers for this VBS. They also make cookies for snacks. WMS member, Susie Strickland, also ensures the leaders are fed spiritually every morning, so they can go and feed others. She leads a morning devotion and prayer time for all the leaders. We offer thanksgiving for this group and for all the WMS members across the country who continue to serve in countless ways.

Local

Paris Presbyterial WMS auxiliary hosted Dr. Carol Miller at a recent meeting at Paris Presbyterian

Remembering

Hazel McCreath
Arthur Circle WMS
Knox Presbyterian
Goderich ON

Margaret Bigelow
St. Andrew's WMS
Kitchener ON

Margaret Hammond
New St. James WMS
London ON

Irene Eby
Beatrice Scott Auxilliary
WMS
Port Elgin ON

Jacqueline Armstong
Sand Hill Church
Women
Sand Hill Presbyterian
Church
Seeley's Bay ON

Joyce Harris
Verna Willows
Muriel Wray
St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Women
Stratford ON

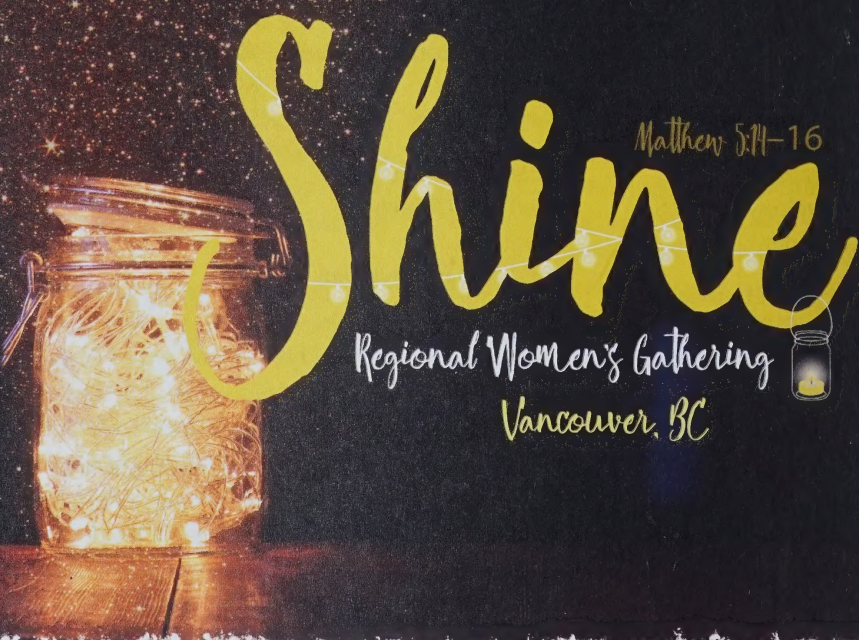


Church. Many women attended the presentation from the Presbyterian, as well as members of other churches and friends in Paris. Carol has been an advocate for over 25 years for gender equality. She says that she is more optimistic now as society seems to be reacting differently to issues of gender equality and abuse. She said the profile of sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual behaviour has recently been raised due in part to the #MeToo movement.

Carol is the daughter of Guy and Shirley Miller. Many of you know Shirley as a long-time WMS

member, who has been active at the congregational, presbyterian, synodical, and national level. Miller acknowledged the positive influence her mother had on her.





Shine

Matthew 5:14-16

Regional Women's Gathering

Vancouver, BC

**Join us for the 2019 Regional Women's
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Glad Tidings

July/August 2018



Photo: PWS&D



24 The (Un)Holy Land of Palestine by Dorcas and Noel Gordon

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*Mental Health Awareness
Week: October 1-7, 2018*



Glad Tidings

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About half of all Canadians have experienced some type of mental illness, according to a Sun Life Financial study released in May 2018. The more I learn about mental health issues, the more I know I must learn. Likely because of the stigma related to mental illness, even though I have friends who suffer, I still feel I know so little. Perhaps, it is because I am not open enough to ask, and I mean really ask, how they are. Perhaps, it is because they are not ready, or are not even able to tell others about it.

For various reasons, many suffer in silence. The Sun Life study also said that about one-quarter of those who suffer, did not even mention their condition to their health care provider. Perhaps, as a church, we can provide places where people do not have to be silent.

What if, as a church, we start to have conversations about mental health? We can bring in speakers and begin learning more. We can consider hiring a parish nurse that can connect with our members, provide resources, support members, and organize events.

What if, as a church, we start getting real about our lives? Instead of putting on our 'Sunday best,' what if we begin talking about some of our daily struggles. Whether we are dealing with mental health or not, we all have dark days. We all have struggles with work, family, health, faith, and friends. In sharing our own struggles, we allow others to do the same.

What if, as a church, we pray for the mental health of our members? In our prayers within worship, we can lift up those suffering from depression, bipolar disorders, anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and other mental health issues.

What is, as a church, we make space for our members, and others, to care for all aspects of their health? What if we provide space for true friendships to develop? What if we offer exercise classes? What if we teach spiritual practices that can slow us down and connect us with God? What if we allow our members to take a break from volunteering if they are giving too much, or a place to serve if they are looking to help?

Can we make a difference? I think we can, and it starts today as you read this *Glad Tidings* and learn a little more about mental illness.



Bonjou



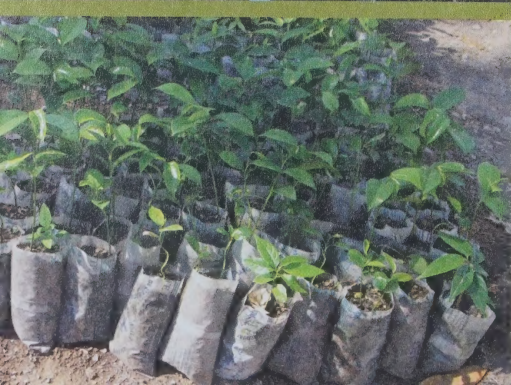
by Alexis McKeown

“Bonjou se paspo ou”

Hello is your passport—this was the first lesson we were taught upon arriving in Haiti. A welcoming hello and genuine hospitality was what we experienced in Haiti. It started when we first met our guide and translator, Meagan, and continued with every partner visit.

I had the privilege to visit Haiti on a WMS exposure tour in January 2018 to witness the work that Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) is supporting in the wonderfully complex world of Haiti.

We are often drawn into a single portrait of Haiti—a portrait of corrupt politicians, an unstable economy, malnourished children, communities riddled with disease, and a fate of natural destruction.





HAITI

Exposure Tour

As outraged as the world was by Trump's comments about Haiti, I would argue that it crassly and somewhat 'extremely' reflects the common thought and what is portrayed through the media regarding Haiti. Many see Haiti only as a poor country in the Western hemisphere. We need to learn more. For example, Haiti relies on the metaphors and imagery of proverbs, some which I will share in this article.

"Bay kou bliye, pote mak sonje"

The giver of the blow forgets—the bearer of the scar remembers.

Haiti's history has filled many books. The facts change depending on your perspective. As Napoleon once said, "What is history, but a fable agreed upon?" I am not a historian and will admit to not understanding all the

nuances that comprise Haiti's story. It has a very complicated past. It involves colonialism, genocide, slavery, wars, revolution, independency, compensation, government coups, occupations, UN involvement, international pressure, government theft, embezzlement, natural disasters, and the list could go on.

Here, Janet Brewer, trip participant, reflects: "I knew before travelling to Haiti that I might be baffled by the circumstances that have led to this beautiful country being one of the poorest in the world. I kept asking myself—why? I read the material that we were given in preparation for the trip and I must admit to 'googling' quite a bit!

Haiti was "discovered" in 1492 and that was when its current troubles seemed to begin. Country after

country, for more than 500 years after its “discovery,” seemed to take advantage of Haiti. Gold, crops, and slaves were plentiful in this tropical paradise but after years of oppression, gaining its freedom from France had a terrible cost.

France demanded reparations for losing its lucrative business (land, slaves, businesses, and equipment) in Haiti. About 150 million gold francs (later reduced to 90 million) were demanded by France or crippling embargoes would continue. Haiti agreed and borrowed funds at high interest rates in 1825 and this debt didn’t get paid off until 1947.

This terrible debt, hurricanes, earthquakes, and unstable governments have left Haiti to recover in current times.”

“Deye mòn gen mòn”

Behind mountains there are mountains

We started out to see our first partner, Partenariat pour le Developpement Local (PDL), very early on our first full day in the country. Wendy Cox (a WMS member from Kincardine, ON area and a trip participant) writes: “It’s hard to form an impression of a place when the most you can see is the twin cones of light from our headlamps, but as the sky lightened we could see people on the road, walking, on motorbikes and scooters, and in vehicles of every shape and description. It was still pretty dim when we got jammed into

the tightest snarl of traffic I have ever witnessed. Apparently, it was a five-way junction and everyone was claiming priority. Moise, our driver, patiently tried to finesse our way through this Gordian knot of vehicles, but it took an enterprising pedestrian to assume control, “You, back up a smidge here! You, angle slightly to the left! You, wait!” We finally shimmied our way loose with just a few millimetres to spare.”

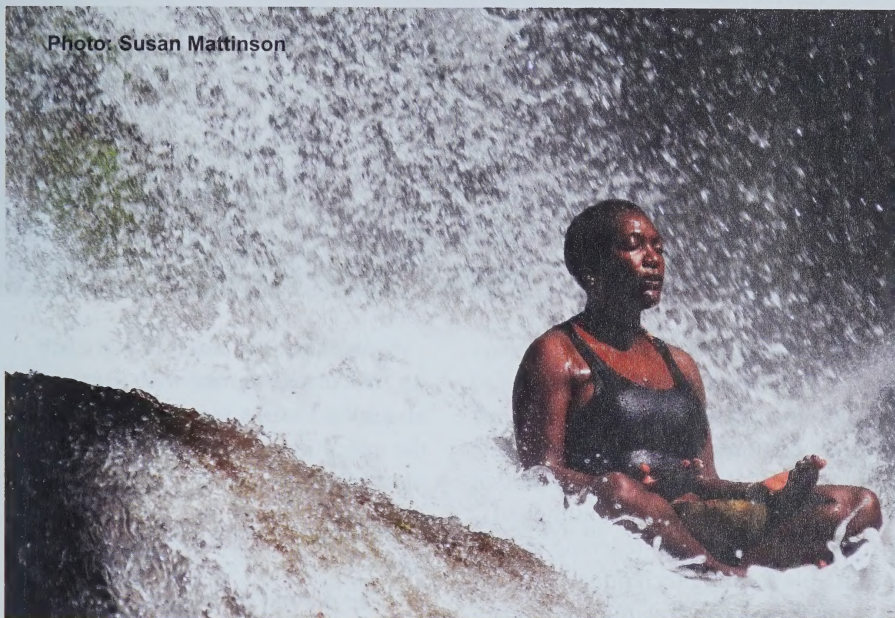
Local traffic and different traffic rules were not our only obstacle. There was an accident that closed the road down, so instead of going over the mountain, we had to drive around it. This created a 5½ hour delay so we saw over nine hours of Haiti while we drove. It was a hair-raising and eye-opening detour. Many roads had three foot potholes or were covered with mounds of dirt and rocks.

After a very long time in the car, we finally made it. Cantave Jean-Baptiste was our guide for the day.

While in Haiti, we visited two organizations that addressed food security. They executed their mission in similar ways but dealt with food security from slightly different directions.

PDL works with the philosophy that rural farmers want more than just being “given” help; they want the opportunity to lead their own community development processes. We visited a few plots of land where farmers explained in great detail and with pride their farming practices.

Photo: Susan Mattinson



Here, Susan Mattinson, trip participant, reflects: “This trip felt less curated, less scheduled. Maybe even less safe in the sense that there were many unpredictable moments and changed plans. Every moment, I felt like we were “in it.” When we stood in the car rental area at the airport; when we arrived at each guest house I’d never been to before; when we drove over rough rural roads that had us swaying (dancing?) in our seats; we were “in it.” When we walked to what turned out to be a pizza-less pizza restaurant; when we saw the Rara parade go by; when we stood at the spiritually powerful Sodo waterfall; when a Carnival float trucked by in the middle of the night, like some loud, neon, alien spacecraft (waking me up, but making me feel like I was dreaming); we were ‘in it.’

I took this picture at Sodo. We are always under specific directions not to take pictures of people without asking them, but I saw this woman from a far distance and I was so moved that I had to break the rule. She is so incredibly beautiful—with her strength, with her stillness, despite the powerful water coming down all around her. In some way that defies explanation, to me, she is Haiti.”

(Susan visited Haiti a few times before our trip. She is comparing this tour of Haiti to previous experiences.)



PDL is an organization of farmers teaching farmers. It works by building peasant cooperatives and associations. Each cooperative has local leaders that represent their community (sometimes thousands of people). PDL starts by teaching easy, affordable farming techniques like A-frames, soil conservation, compost, use of cheap available materials, and crop diversity.

This organization wants a farmer to be able to walk into one of his/her gardens at anytime of year, and be able to put something in their mouths. Farmers might have more than one small-scale plot of land to take care of, and are encouraged to have a second one for diversity. One plot might be on the mountain, another on wetter land, which helps them diversify both nutritional yields and timing.

When visiting a cooperative our group asked what are the benefits to being part of the program and they said:

- more children in school
- easier conflict resolution between neighbours
- healthier communities

- working towards same goals.

The leaders spoke with great pride about the lessons they've learned and the execution of these lessons in their plots of land.

“Anpil men chay pa lou”

Many hands make a load lighter

The second partner we visited that addressed food security was the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Haiti. MCC sees environmental protection, food security, and sustainable livelihoods as being deeply intertwined and thus need to be addressed together.

Food security to them is organized in four areas:

- Agro forests (plants and trees working in harmony)
- Nurseries
- Community clubs (youth groups)
- Training

MCC is building peasant cooperatives and associations to address the challenge of a rapidly changing climate, worsening international trade, severely limited infrastructure, and few opportunities in rural areas.



Jean Remy Azor, the agroforestry coordinator, showed us the grounds of the house. There was a grafting tree they were experimenting with. The bottom is from a sturdy tree that is used to drought and the top a fruit tree that is resilient and nutritious.

Before we visited communities, we also learned more about deforestation in Haiti. Before Europeans invaded Haiti it was almost entirely forested and now it is less than 3% forested. We also heard about their dependence on charcoal, which comes from trees. It is the primary source of energy both for home cooking and business. MCC admits that charcoal helps feed families, and is also a huge export item. However, it does not help with the reforestation efforts in Haiti. The key is education—to have people replant a tree when one is cut down. Trees are an investment that is needed for the future.

MCC has nurseries working in 23 communities which produce over 500,000 trees per year. We were welcomed into a tree nursery where we saw flats of fruit tree seedlings under a

cover of shade. The nursery was going to begin work on other types of trees to be used primarily for building products and homes. Community members help to care for the trees.

“Lespwa Fè Viv”

Hope makes one live

We visited our partner, Partners in Health (PIH), at the Mirebalais University Hospital to hear about two PWS&D projects: malnutrition in children under five years old and gender-based violence. PIH is a non-profit health-based organization that has been working in Haiti for nearly three decades. Many of the books we read before going were written by the founder of the organization, Dr. Paul Farmer.

The two programs are run out of 12 health sites across Haiti’s central plateau.

It was estimated that in 2017, 48,000 children under five would suffer from acute malnutrition. Although the following fact are a little out-dated, they still hit home. From 2008–2012, 23% of infants were born with low birth rates. Additionally, almost 22% of children experience

moderate and severe stunting, about 5% suffer from moderate to severe wasting, and about 11% were underweight.

This year, more than 1.3 million people (about 18% of population) will face severe food insecurity for various reasons, including drought. Children and infants are a very vulnerable group.

The success of the project is crucial. The major product PIH uses to fight the malnutrition is a peanut-based supplement, called Nourimanba. It is produced in Haiti, using primarily Haitian products.

The Malnutrition project has four main objectives:

- Increase the number of children cured of acute malnutrition
- Reduce the drop-out rate among children with acute malnutrition who are monitored in the program
- Reduce the number of children suffering from acute malnutrition requiring hospital care

- Increase breastfeeding in children from 0-6 months.

It generally takes a continuous 12–16 weeks to cure malnutrition, and one of the challenges the project faces is getting a family to visit a clinic continually for that time period. To address this, mobile clinics are the next step for this project.

Even with the challenges the project faces, over 1,100 beneficiaries consumed over 5,147 kg of Nourimanba.

“Kouri pou lapli; tonbe nan gran riviye”

Don't run from the rain to fall in the river.

The treatment and prevention of gender-based violence in Haiti is the second project that PWS&D supports through Partners in Health (PIH).

Gender-based violence against girls and women in Haiti is a serious health and human rights issue. Haitian women are known as the “poto mitan”

or the pillars of the family and yet they are the most underserved and at-risk members of society.

Watch you don't run from the rain and into the river. It is the idea or fear that you can always get



Photo: PWS&D



something worse so be careful that you are not running from one bad situation into a worse one. This is a proverb we heard when we were talking to the head of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) program. This is a cultural teaching that the GBV program is fighting against. There is also a large stigma and victim blaming attached to the charge of sexual abuse.

Gender based violence victims are further victimized on a multitude of levels. The justice system is often indifferent, unaware, or ill equipped to address crimes. Community members mock or shun victims, sometimes so badly that the woman is driven out of her community and abandons whatever support system that may exist for her. The health system is often unable to prevent post-assault pregnancy or sickness due to poor training or weak coordination. PIH is working to address all these issues.

Here is one woman's story (names have been changed):

One morning Rodeline and several other women were attacked and raped while on their way to the market. Here is part of Rodeline's story:

"After [I was raped], I felt very distraught and thought that my life was over. I went to the Verettes health centre where the attending nurse and the doctor welcomed me, taking care of me emotionally and medically. They listened to me and counselled me. Later, they ran some lab tests and gave me some medications to avoid potential diseases. After the lab tests showed normal results, I felt better and psychologically stronger."

Recovery from a traumatic experience like rape and the stigma that accompanies it demands a holistic approach.

The overall objectives of the project are:

- To ensure access to integrated, quality, and dignified care to women and girls who are at risk or victims of GBV.
- To reinforce links between health and legal authorities and



Photo: PWS&D

women's associations in the fight against GBV.

- To increase resilience of women and girls and communities by way of awareness campaigns, advocacy, and community level education.

PIH have created a GBV Surveillance Committee model where school directors, police officers, community members, and others are appointed to address education and concerns. They've been trained to help with reporting and supporting victims.

The project is seeing results. More instances are being reported, more women are getting the immediate medical attention they need, more women are getting post-assault

Are there reasons that you should consider a Mission trip? Let me share one more Haitian proverb for you to ponder, "The rock in the water doesn't understand the misery of the rock in the sun."

Wendy Cox

support, and more women are being connected to women's organizations which can guide them through the various social and legal systems.

Education is also being addressed. Women, health care providers, police, school staff, and community-based workers are connecting and educating women and men about the issues that surround GBV.

"Aprè dans, tanbou toujou lou"

After the dance, the drums are always heavy

After experiencing and learning so much about Haiti, our minds were full, our bodies were tired and sore, but our spirits were happy. We ended our time in Haiti with music from Haitian musicians who sang about Haiti's history, struggles, and hope for the future

Here, Wendy Cox, trip participant, reflects: "Our final evening in Haiti was crowned by the presence and performance of three local men performing traditional Haitian music. The musicians played under a thatch-roofed shelter, and we sat and listened, and occasionally got up and danced."

Friend or Foe for Mental Health?

by Mary Jacobs

A close friend asks to meet you for coffee—she wants to share some news. You look forward to this encounter at the coffee shop and she shares that she has been “very stressed”—crying at work, yelling at her kids, and feeling very irritable. She went to her family doctor and he has started her on an antidepressant medication as the doctor diagnosed her with clinical depression—not just sad days. The doctor has even suggested she take a leave of absence from work. What do you say:

- “You’ll be fine—let’s plan a spa day!”
- “Get your husband and kids to help you more.”
- “You can’t be depressed—you laugh all the time.”
- “Don’t take those meds—they will make you fat!”
- “Don’t tell anyone at work—they will fire you.”

Do you tell her about your problems at work and home?

Do you think, “I’ve got to text all our friends to tell them she is crazy.”

Do you never invite her for coffee again.

Or do you say: “Wow, that’s really hard. Thanks for sharing with me. I will keep this confidential unless you tell me otherwise.”

“I am so glad you saw your doctor. Is the medication helping? I will also pray for you.”

“What can I do to help?”

Do you send her a text saying, I am thinking of you—hope you are having a better day.

Do you call her?

Do you ask her to meet for coffee again and again! If she doesn’t accept the first time (medication can take a while to kick in), keep checking in!

Do you invite her to go for a walk or enjoy the outdoors? Exercise causes

our bodies to secrete endorphins which helps lift our mood.

Do you read about what causes depression and how to support your friend?

Depression is as physical in cause as diabetes—let's start treating people with mental health the same way as those with "physical" health issues. Make it a priority to talk to your circle of friends and family about mental health and the stigma attached to it (but not about your friend and her situation unless she gives you permission). Here are some websites to help you learn more:

- Mood Disorders of Canada: <https://mdsc.ca/>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://cmha.ca/>
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: www.camh.net
- Schizophrenia Society of Ontario: www.schizophrenia.on.ca
- NAMI Ontario: <http://www.f2fontario.ca/>

Not my usual self...

It was a slow but steady progression downward. At first I was tired all the time but I couldn't get a good night's sleep. I went to bed early and tossed and turned. I went to bed late and still tossed and turned. My mind wouldn't turn off and I kept thinking of people I had talked to and how they must have thought I was crazy because I wouldn't make a decision. I worried that I had said no

to going for break with a colleague—did she think I was weird? Then there was the time I met with my supervisor and ended up in tears in her office and I don't really know why.

I would come home and my husband, I assumed, wanted tired and overwhelmed me to clean the kitchen, and I gave him the silent treatment until I crept to our bed and cried endlessly into my pillow. The kids were making more mess in their rooms and our family room and I screamed from the top of my lungs which made them cry and yell back at me. Then I felt so angry and then so guilty for over-reacting and then I cried again.

This went on for a number of months. I googled my symptoms, took mini online depression tests (www.depressionhurts.ca). Then I finally made an appointment and met my family doctor. She said she thought I had been clinically depressed for maybe several years, but now I was finally acknowledging it. I started some medication and I went to some counselling with a psychologist whose cost were covered by my work benefits. I thought about my quality of life and the stress I was putting on myself and my family.

It's not easy to admit that you might have a mental health condition. Every person will experience different symptoms and you should listen to close family and friends you trust about how they see your behaviours change or changing. Be honest with yourself. If you think it is possible

you have a mental health condition—**ASK FOR HELP.** This is really hard when you are normally the helper!

Asking for help means:

- Tell your spouse, parents, close friend, work colleague, supervisor, or clergy—someone you trust.
- Make a doctor's appointment—if your doctor isn't available go to a walk in clinic.
- Call your Employer Assistance Provider (EAP) for referrals for counselling immediately if you need it; if you are not working there are other community resources offering low-cost counselling.
- If you are feeling suicidal, call 911 or get someone to call for you or go to the emergency at the hospital.
- With the help of the professionals, peers, counsellors, EAP, make a plan for yourself about how you think you can get better and stay well. Mental health is not much different than any other health condition which is not surprising because our brain and our bodies are all hooked together.

Also:

- Exercise and eat healthy.
- Take medication as prescribed.
- Manage your stress.
- Attend a support group.
- Use alternate therapies that help you like yoga, meditation, mindfulness, or tapping.

- Build your faith and use your relationship with God to support you.
- Socialize with trusted family and friends—get rid of toxic relationships.
- Ensure you have a purpose by doing purposeful activities.
- Learn how to advocate for yourself and be an informed consumer in the maze of medical interventions.
- You also may want to register for WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) to help you organize your plan for recovery. (www.mooddisorders.ca/wrap)

Change won't happen at once, just the same way as a mood disorder sometimes creeps up on you, it can take a while to get the right medication, supports, and counselling, but don't give up. Keep asking for help. Just like diabetes, you might have to take medication for the rest of your life—medication for mental health disorders is just as life saving. Don't let others shame you because you take medication to be the best person you can be!

For caregivers who live with someone with a mood disorder, see these ten tips from the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario:

Tips For Family Members and Friends

1. *It's not your fault:* You did not cause your family member's illness.

2. *You are not alone:* Millions of families are caring for someone with a mood disorder. You can meet other family members at caregiver support groups.
3. *Your emotions and reactions are normal:* You may experience a range of emotions, and that's normal. While that is to be expected and understood, don't let your emotions get in the way of your relationship with your loved one.
4. *Take care of yourself:* Set healthy boundaries and limitations on how much you will do. Take time for yourself and for activities you enjoy.
5. *Find social support:* Supporting a family member with a mood disorder can be lonely and isolating. Find support through other families who are going through a similar experience.
6. *Knowledge is power:* Learn as much as you can about your loved one's illness and the treatment options.
7. *Life is a marathon:* Progress is often made in very small steps. Applaud progress and provide encouragement.
8. *You are only human:* You don't have the power to change the neurochemistry in your loved one's brain. Just do the best that you can do.
9. *Create a crisis plan:* Talk to your loved one about what will happen in the event of a crisis, under various circumstances. Put the plan in writing.

10. *Never lose hope.* Mood disorders are treatable medical conditions. Because mood disorders are often cyclical, the going may get really tough. Just remember that the right treatment is out there. Hold onto hope and remember that you are not alone.

Other helpful websites for caregivers:

- Family Association for Mental Health Everywhere (FAME), www.fameforfamilies.com
- Families for Depression Awareness, www.familyaware.org
- National Family Caregivers Association, www.nfcacares.org
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), www.nami.org
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, www.dbsalliance.org

*Mary Jacobs has recovered from depression and is passionate about helping others recover from mental health challenges. She works as a caseworker supporting low-income families to become more independent by connecting them to the available community resource; leads a peer support group for mood disorders at her church; and shares her laugh with all she meets. She also administers a Facebook page, **Brampton Mood Disorders Support Group**, where mental health posts are shared frequently to provide support and education.*

God's Healing Creation

by Kristine O'Brien



When my children were young, we lived across the street from a lovely wooded ravine. On long hot summer days, all six of us would find refuge there, making our way along the dirt paths. It was slow going with a stroller, eight little legs, and all kinds of bugs and sticks to distract us. They were low-tech and completely free of charge but those days of, “let’s go and walk in the woods!” were a gift to my bored children and their frazzled parents. Little did I know way back then that our walks did more than cool us off and give us something to do. They offered all of us the gift of stronger mental health.

Forest-bathing, a term that was coined in Japan in the 1980s, has become popular in many places, and with good reason. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy (natureandforesttherapy.org), being in the woods can lower stress, boost your immune system, make you more creative, and improve your mood. Add to that some vitamin D from the sun and the endorphins that come from physical activity, and something as ordinary as an afternoon walk turns into something very powerful. There is a reason physicians have begun prescribing time in nature to people who struggle

with mental illness. It helps.

The truth is that we need more help when it comes to mental illness. I serve a modest suburban congregation with about a hundred and fifty members. We are a mixture of older and younger people, and diverse in our ethnicity and faith history. Most of us look pretty good on a Sunday morning, casually dressed and smiling at one another.

And yet we are not all doing that well. Increasingly, I have people ask if we can meet for a visit because they have been diagnosed with depression or an anxiety disorder. Some are embarrassed, speaking in a whisper or barely making eye contact. Some stumble over the words because they are trying to avoid terms like "mentally ill." Looking at our happy little church from the outside, you would never guess that in one year alone we had four admissions to the mental health unit at the hospital and two members who attempted suicide. Too many of us are suffering.

I love to garden and I easily make the connection between nature and mental wellness. I know that an afternoon pulling weeds can go a long way to working out my frustrations ("Take that, you nasty crabgrass!"). Every spring, I see the first few snowdrops peek their head out of a barely thawed patch of earth and receive a lesson in hope. Even without a scientific study to back me up, I know that coming nose to nose with

worms, ladybugs, and caterpillars can elevate my mood. The garden gives me a sense of place and purpose.

Because I have suffered through several episodes of clinical depression, however, I also know that nature has therapeutic value when mental health becomes mental illness. When I was mired in darkness and sure that nothing could possibly make me feel better, I sat on the grass and received encouragement from a robin who hopped nearby. Flowers on the kitchen table spoke beauty into moments of despair. The sun rose every morning, even when I wished it wouldn't, and assured me that there was still light in God's universe.

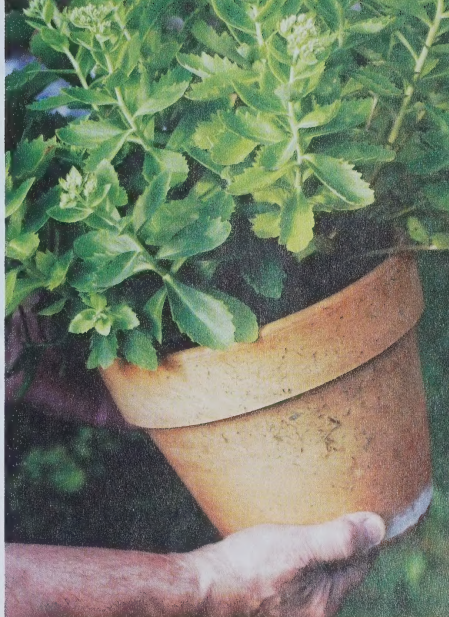
When a member of my congregation was admitted to a program at the Homewood Health Centre in Guelph a couple of years ago, my understanding of the connection between nature and mental health grew even deeper. Homewood is a mental health and addiction facility that sits on fifty acres of green space bordering on the Speed River and along with out-patient programs, there are some three hundred people at a time who are able to access their in-patient care. They offer far more than medication and group therapy. It is a stunning property with extensive gardens, an outdoor labyrinth, and an active greenhouse. Patients are encouraged to stroll the pathways and soak in their surroundings, finding calm and comfort. They are even

invited to get their hands dirty planting, weeding, or harvesting.

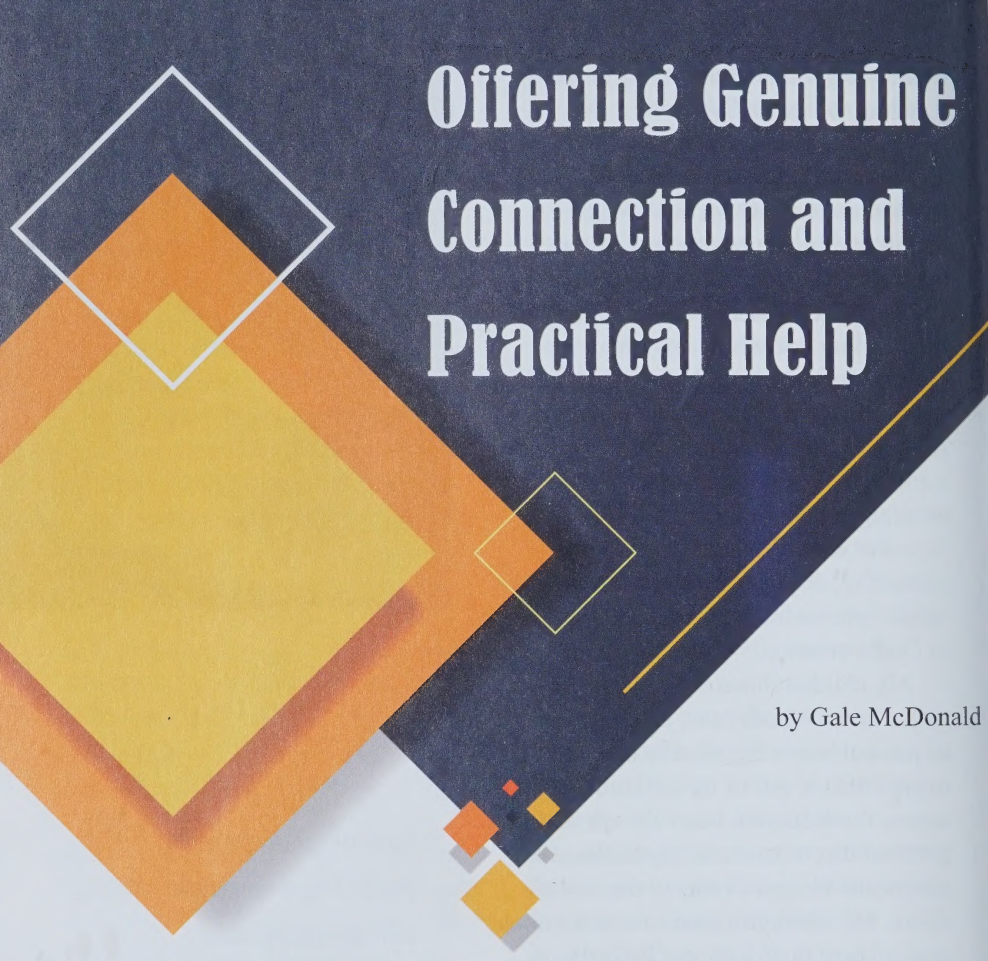
There is wisdom in a place like Homewood. It acknowledges that some illnesses will not be cured by simply writing a prescription. We are complicated creatures, and mental illness is a complex challenge to overcome. To find healing and wholeness, there is a need for care that engages not just the body, but also the heart, mind, and spirit. Access to green spaces and establishing a connection with the natural world can be a huge benefit to those who suffer. Whether we call it forest bathing, gardening, or just watching a sunset, we cannot overestimate the value to be found in God's creation.

My children have outgrown our family walks in the woods now. But none of us has outgrown the need to tend to our mental health. All of us still find ways to access the outdoors. I can always find a patch of dirt to tend and my husband's job means frequent visits to the out-of-doors. My children spend time at summer camp where their wellness is rooted in sandy beaches, shady trees, and waves on the shore. We like to eat outside in the summer, and we love the smell of a fresh tree at Christmas. We know that spending time with nature doesn't offer any guarantees of good health, but it certainly goes a long way to nourishing and sustaining us.

Rev. Kristine O'Brien is minister of Trafalgar Presbyterian in Oakville ON. One of her passions is spending time in God's beautiful world.



Access to green spaces and establishing a connection with the natural world can be a huge benefit to those who suffer. Whether we call it forest bathing, gardening, or just watching a sunset, we cannot overestimate the value to be found in God's creation.



Offering Genuine Connection and Practical Help

by Gale McDonald

Everyone has a story—a story that is complex and unique to their life experience. It takes time to get to know someone's story, especially the parts that they hold deep within their hearts. For many people mental illness is part of their life story. The Canadian Mental Health Association tells us that 1 in 5 Canadians will personally experience a mental illness or problem, in any given year. They also tell us that mental illness can affect anyone regardless of income

level, education, age, or culture. Even those who are not personally living with a mental illness will likely find themselves supporting a family, friend, or colleague at some point in their lives.

As a congregational minister, I am frequently faced with supporting those who have a mental illness or are a support person to someone living with one. Even though I came into ministry with some knowledge of mental health challenges and how to help people

who are living with them, I can feel helpless and unsure of how to provide the most effective help, especially when someone is in crisis. To help me gain more skills and confidence in helping people who are living with mental illness, I recently took a two-day Mental Health First Aid course.

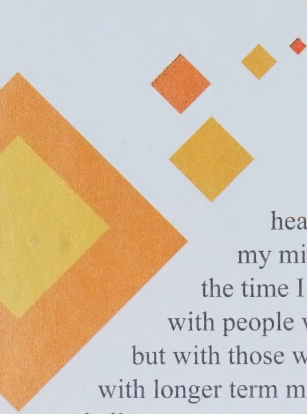
Like a medical first aid course, this course is designed to help people recognize the symptoms of various mental health problems and know how to respond with a supportive, respectful, and helpful conversation. Mental health first aid does not train participants to treat the illnesses but helps people to know how to guide people to resources and support that can best help them. Through teaching, discussion, and case studies, we learned about substance abuse disorders, mood-related disorders (including depression, anxiety, and trauma related disorders), and psychotic disorders. We also learned about suicide and how to talk to someone who may be having thoughts about suicide.

In all aspects of ministry I go by the mantra “do no harm.” This undoubtedly stems from the many years I worked in health care but it equally applies to our life as Christ followers and as leaders in the church. We are called to walk with people and help them come to know the unconditional love of our Triune God. Getting to know that we are each a beloved child of God, who is

loved more than we can imagine, is very challenging for many people. Too often people who are living with mental illness have been judged and treated in disrespectful ways making it even more difficult for them to believe that they are lovable. The language that is frequently used stigmatizes people living with mental illness, leading them to be referred to as their illness rather than a person who is living with an illness. When all of these things happen, it’s not surprising that people struggle to believe that they are the beloved children of God.

As the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to help change this. I’m glad that we, as the church, are taking more steps to understand mental health and how we can better support people and create an environment where everyone can have a vital part in the life and mission of the church. Jesus was drawn to those in need and He invited those who are weary and carrying heavy burdens to come to him for rest. (see Matthew 11: 28) In the beatitudes (see Matthew 5), Jesus named those who are blessed and his statements are very counter-cultural to what modern society says. As Christ followers, we not only have a call, but a responsibility, to connect with those who are dealing with mental health challenges affirming that they are loved and yes, even blessed.

Treating people with dignity is one way we show people what God’s love



looks like. I see people with a range of mental health challenges in my ministry. Most of the time I'm not dealing with people who are in crisis but with those who are living with longer term mental health challenges.

The congregation where I serve has people drop in looking for help from time to time. Many of these people are living with mental health challenges and they are struggling to get by. While they really would like to get a grocery card and be on their way, I like to take the time to 'check in' on other parts of their lives. As we talk, I frequently refer them to resources and I always offer to pray for them. Taking time with these visitors is meaningful and the people who come back to see me every few months or so appreciate the fact that I get to know their names and remember aspects of their life. These are powerful, grace-filled moments that exemplify what it means to be the church.

The Mental Health First Aid course helped me reflect on how we, as communities of faith, respond to people living with mental health challenges in a pastoral sense. Sometimes this is relatively easy but when situations are more complex it can be very challenging, yet not impossible. After taking the course, I feel that I have a

greater understanding of a wider range of mental health concerns. This will help me as I provide pastoral care and as I coach others in the congregation in doing the same.

I've had the pleasure of witnessing people reach out with love to welcome people, take the time to get to know them, and understand what they are going through and the challenges with which they live. I've witnessed them follow the person's lead by not forcing them to share too much too soon. These are beautiful moments of love and grace when we, as a community of faith, are making meaningful connections. I've also witnessed people struggle to know what to do and how to respond. These are the spaces where I turn into 'coach' and when I sometimes feel like a helpless coach. The Mental Health First Aid course gave me some new skills and resources that will be helpful in such circumstances.

Following the course, I've also been reflecting upon the way we approach mental health beyond individual pastoral care. In particular, I've been thinking about the way we make space for these experiences through what we say and pray during worship. Do our words and actions make people feel welcomed and accepted, or judged? How are we helping or hindering people in seeing themselves as beloved children of God? In what ways are we helping them connect and be part of the life

and work of the community of faith? And equally important, I've been asking myself about the ways that we are excluding people, perhaps making people feel like they aren't enough. These reflections are important as we strive to be a welcoming community for all God's people.

The Mental Health First Aid course is a good place to begin to learn about mental health. I believe it would be helpful for clergy, pastoral care visitors, along with anyone else who has an interest in how we can create space in our communities of faith for all God's children. The course is a beginning, hopefully the beginning of a conversation and learning that will enhance the way

we welcome, care for, and serve with others. I find I'm left with areas where I want, and need, to go deeper but the course provided a catalyst for this learning. I'm left with this vision—wouldn't it be wonderful if more people, who are living with mental illness or find themselves supporting someone who is, could find a home in a community of faith and experience God's endless love and acceptance?

Gale Macdonald is the Minister at Clarkson Road Presbyterian Church in Mississauga. Before moving into congregational ministry, Gale worked in the London Regional Cancer Program where she was the leader of the Education and Supportive Care Programs.



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The (Un)Holy

by Dorcas and Noel Gordon



Opening Prayer:

Lord of all, we lay before you the wrongs which have been committed in the past and which are still being committed today. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hope that things will ever change in the future. Help us Lord to continue to trust in your Word as we look forward to the joy known in Easter Sunday. We ask that you would renew the courage of those in positions of power to help them to speak out against injustice and to work for a just peace. Lord, in your mercy...

(Sabeel Wave of Prayer, March 29, 2018)¹

Scripture:

Matthew 15: 21–28, Luke 18: 1–8

Lament, found in several biblical passages means to “cry out.” It can be a prayerful plea to God for help or a complaint to God over systemic injustice that needs redress. In these two texts, women cry out against the oppressive system of patriarchy, which has been codified in law, both societal and ecclesial.

In Matthew’s gospel, a gentile woman approaches Jesus and asks for healing for her daughter. He ignores her, but she continues to cry out. The disciples find her cries so irksome that they ask Jesus to send her away. He responds only to the disciples, denying her appeal. However, the woman

This is the fourth of four studies on the Land of Palestine. We began these studies in the November/December 2017 issues of *Glad Tidings*.

Land of PALESTINE

persists, imploring him, countering every argument he makes. In the end, he recognizes she has a strength of character that will persist in calling out—naming the injustice of limiting God's call to a particular religious and cultural group—until he responds. In the story, she, a gentile woman with a demon-possessed daughter, is someone Jesus and his disciples would be expected to ignore, but she refuses to be ignored and cries out against unjust cultural and religious expectations. Jesus recognizes the strong faith within her to lament and to keep on lamenting until her cries are heard and a positive response results.

In the story of the widow facing the power of an unjust judge, once again we hear lament, a crying out against the unjust structures that keep her life less than it should be. She cries out again and again until the judge calls for



her dismissal, fearing she will give him a “bruised eye.” In first century Palestine, the widow is the one who is supposed to receive protection under Torah law, which indicates that if a widow cries out, calling attention to any abuse, God will hear her cry and God’s wrath will burn hot (Exodus 22: 21–24).

This story speaks to how Torah law has been interpreted to support the word of the powerful—their interpretation of the law becomes what is. Added is their claim that this is what God intended in the Torah. Even more incriminating, in a 1st century system of patronage the judge’s primary allegiance was to those who appointed him not to justice. In other words, it was possible to apply the law so that it appeared impartial and just, but actually supported an oppressive social structure.

Through her lament, the widow goes public. She condemns the system for what it is and calls it to be what it should be. Walter Wink, in addressing systems of domination, states, “Whenever anyone steps out of the system and tells the truth, lives the truth—that enables everyone else to peer behind the curtain too.... If the main pillar of a system is living a lie, then it is not surprising that the fundamental threat to it is living the truth.”²

Lament—a powerful way to cry out against oppressive systems and to call for redress. In so many cases, social, political and economic systems whether in governments, families, or the church have become so much the way things are that this pattern appears natural.³ But it is something constructed and like the widow in Luke’s gospel, it is important to go public and declare all systems of oppression to be sinful. Their structure is not divinely or biblically ordained but humanly fashioned. Yet in so many cases, oppression that claims a biblical warrant is the most difficult system to dismantle because it understands itself to be “divinely” ordained.⁴ Thus, as Reformed Christians we need to look at our role in perpetuating violence against Palestinians both in their bodies and in their souls. No system should be supported that causes marginalization and oppression .

In 2009, the Jerusalem Christian leaders in the *Kairos Document: A moment of truth; A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering* called upon Christians around the world

to hear their cries for justice, asking us to come and see what it means to live under the oppression of occupation. In June 2017, Palestinians again wrote to the international Christian community describing today's Palestine as a place where discrimination and inequality, military occupation, and systematic oppression are the rule. The letter states: "Today, we stand in front of an impasse and we have reached a deadlock. Despite all the promises, endless summits, UN resolutions, religious and lay leader's callings—Palestinians are still yearning for their freedom and independence and seeking justice and equality." The coalition expressed its concern with Israel's "systemic assault on Palestinian creative resistance," and with the fact that religious extremism is on the rise, with religious minorities paying a heavy price.

The letter continues its plea for help from the ecumenical movement, stating, "We need brave women and men who are willing to stand in the forefront. This is no time for shallow diplomacy Christians."

The letter urges Christian churches worldwide to take several actions, to:

- recognize Israel as an apartheid state;
- condemn the Balfour declaration as unjust;
- take a clear theological stand against any theology or Christian group that justifies the occupation and privileges one nation over the other based on ethnicity or a covenant;
- stand against religious extremism;
- revisit and challenge religious dialogue partners;
- lead campaigns for church leaders and pilgrims to visit Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities;
- defend the right of Palestinian Christians to resist the occupation creatively and non-violently;
- create lobby groups in defense of Palestinian Christians; and
- create a strategic program within the World Council of Churches to lobby, advocate, and develop active programs towards justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

This letter expressed in strong language the urgent situation of the people in Palestine: "We are on the verge of a catastrophic

collapse,” the letter states. “This could be our last chance to achieve a just peace. As a Palestinian Christian community, this could be our last opportunity to save the Christian presence in this land.”⁵

According to our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers we have one more opportunity to respond before it is too late. With such finality in mind, this fourth study on the land of Palestine focuses on lament, crying out once again against the unjust practices and laws in Israel that oppress the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim. It also cries out against the financial support given by the United States to Israel for modern military warfare while at the same time purporting to be a fair and just mediator of the conflict. It decries the myths that continue to exist, the disinformation that Israel feeds to a gullible world. It cries out against the unjust division of water, the use of Palestinian land to test toxic substances, and the apartheid wall as a form of land annexation.

A recent report (March 2017) carried out by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) declared that, according to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, “Israel has established an apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole.” The report continues:

Aware of the seriousness of this allegation, the authors of the report conclude that available evidence establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Israel is guilty of policies and practices that constitute the crime of apartheid as legally defined in instruments of international law.⁶

The Executive Secretary of this body, Rami Khalaf, noted that Israel, encouraged by the international community’s disregard for its continual

Definition of Apartheid

Apartheid is a crime against humanity. Not only does international law prohibit that crime, it obliges States and international bodies, and even individuals and private institutions, to take measures to combat it wherever it is committed and to punish its perpetrators. The solution therefore lies in implementing international law, applying the principles of non-discrimination, upholding the right of peoples to self-determination, and achieving justice. (UNESCWA Report)

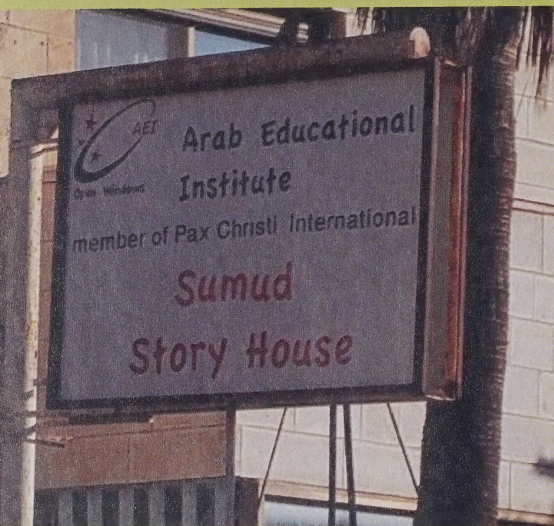
violations of international law, has succeeded over the past decades in imposing and maintaining an apartheid regime that works on two levels. First, the political and geographic fragmentation of the Palestinian people which enfeebles their capacity for resistance and makes it almost impossible for them to change the reality on the ground. Secondly, the oppression of all Palestinians through an array of laws, policies, and practices that ensure domination of them by a racial group and serve to maintain the regime.⁷

Writing this part of the study on March 30, the commemoration of Land Day in Palestine, we are only too aware of how dire the situation is. On Good Friday, Israel attacked, with rubber-coated steel bullets, live ammunition, and tear gas dropped by drones, thousands of unarmed Palestinian civilians participating in the Land March. Statistics report that “fourteen protesters were killed that day as occupation snipers opened fire on a mass demonstration held at various points along Gaza’s eastern boundary with [Israel] in what Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq described as “a calculated, unnecessary, disproportionate, and indiscriminate use of lethal force.”⁸

Lament, crying out against injustice, must continue but it cannot be the final word of this study series, celebration is—celebration of the indomitable human spirit of the Palestinian people who continue to find ways through their own ingenuity and courage, and with the cooperation and support of their Jewish and international advocates, to resist peacefully the humiliation and violence of occupation. We want to leave you with some of their stories.

Land Day

Land Day is the occasion marking Israel’s decision in March 1976 to expropriate, in violation of international law, about 2000 hectares of land around two Palestinian villages to establish new Jewish settlements and a military training camp. In a collective response on March 30, marking one of the first displays of mass coordinated action by Palestinians inside Israel, Palestinians demonstrated from across Galilee in the north all the way to the Negev in the south. Six Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces and more than 100 were injured. Since then, March 30 has been commemorated annually by Palestinians as Yom al-Ard (Land Day) across historic Palestine and in the Palestinian diaspora.⁹



Stories of Popular Resistance:

THE VILLAGE OF IQRIT:

Tucked away a few kilometers from the Lebanese border with little to announce its presence, is the village of Iqrit. All of its Christian inhabitants were forced to flee to Lebanon or the Israeli village of Rameh, after they were expelled by Jewish forces in 1948. Despite the promise that they would be returned in two weeks' time, the villagers were never allowed to return. In 1951, in response to a formal appeal from the Iqrit villagers, now Palestinian (Arab) Israeli citizens, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the former residents be allowed to return to their homes. Before that happened, the Israeli Defense Force, despite awareness of the Supreme Court decision, destroyed this previously Christian village on Christmas Day, 1951. For almost 70 years, the villagers have been fighting a legal battle despite the fact that 10 years ago the supreme court ruled rejecting their demand to be allowed to reclaim their land. The original villagers and their descendants—now around 1,500 people scattered across northern Israel—are allowed only to hold services monthly in the church and bury their dead in the cemetery. All attempts to cultivate its lands are uprooted by the Israeli Lands Administration.¹⁰ Yet the descendants of the original community continue to hope that they might return home.

The Iqrit community association has been offered support by Israeli politicians on both the right and left, and from Israeli artists and

Pray for peace in Palestine/Israel:

<http://presbyterian.ca/2018/05/15/prayer-for-peace-in-palestine-israel/>

intellectuals. Father Souhail Khoury, the priest of the church, says he grew up listening to his parents reminisce about their lost land. “We are all in different villages and towns now, but this is the place where we still meet every month as a family,” he said. “This is the place we call home.”¹¹ For further information and updates about Iqrit, including information about financial donations, go to www.iqrit.org/. Further information is found on <https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/demolished-palestinian-village-comes-back-life/>.

OMAR HAJAJLEH AND THE VILLAGE OF AL WALEJA IN THE WEST BANK

“The Hajajleh house is the only one in Al-Walaja on the Israeli side of the separation barrier. For years, the Israeli state tried to get the family to leave, but they refused. Four years ago, following a petition to the High Court of Justice, the Defense Ministry reached a settlement with the family through which a tunnel under the separation fence was built for them at a cost of four million shekels (\$1.1 million). A large iron gate was built inside the tunnel—the house’s only entrance.

The agreement details family members’ rights in entering and leaving their home. For instance, for anyone except a family member to pass through the gate, the family must submit a request to the Israeli-Palestinian liaison office 48 hours in advance, and it will be approved subject to the usual security permits. The family can’t have more than 10 guests at a time; no guest may arrive after midnight or spend the night, and no merchandise can pass through the gate. If the family violates these terms, they will be denied the ability to open the gate independently, and instead the gate will be opened three times a day for an hour each time and passing through it will be subject to a security check.”¹² For more information on the occupation and its effect on the Palestinian people go to <https://www.btselem.org/>.¹³

AHED TAMIMI

Ahed Tamimi is a teenage Palestinian activist from the village of Nabi Salih

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

Psalms 122: 6–9

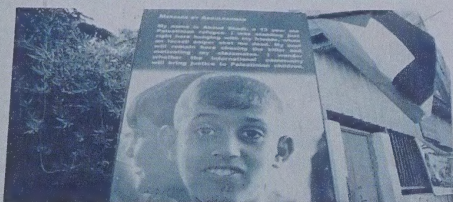
in the occupied West Bank. Best known for appearances in images and videos in which she confronts Israeli soldiers, she is presently serving an eight-month jail term for slapping and kicking the soldiers who had just shot her fifteen-year-old cousin in the head at close range.

She is but one of the numerous children arrested and tried by a military tribunal. According to UN figures, since June 1967 when martial law was imposed on the West Bank, between 750,000 and 800,000 men, women, and children have been arrested and prosecuted in Israeli military courts. Each year this works out to between 500 and 700 children. The minimum age of criminal responsibility in a military court is twelve.¹⁴ Contrary to the civilian court system, the children who are arrested are not only denied the right to have their parents or a lawyer present when being interrogated but are often subjected to violence and threats when arrested. On the website of B'Tselem is a description of each part of this process: https://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/201803_minors_in_jeopardy.

The Executive Summary of a recent investigation into the Israeli military's treatment of children, conducted by UNICEF, stated the following:

Following an increasing number of allegations of ill-treatment of children in military detention, UNICEF has conducted a review of practices related to children who come into contact with the military detention system, from apprehension, to court proceedings and outcome. The review further considers whether the military detention system is in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, or Punishment. This paper is a result of this review and analysis of practices. It concludes that the ill-treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic, and institutionalized throughout the process, from the moment of arrest until the child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing.

CHILDREN KILLED



Children account for a third of the 105 Palestinians killed by the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during 2016. Most of those children were killed in the course of what Israel alleges were attacks or attempted attacks, mainly on soldiers at checkpoints. Other

All photos have been provided by the author or The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society. They are from previous participants of study tours to the Middle East.

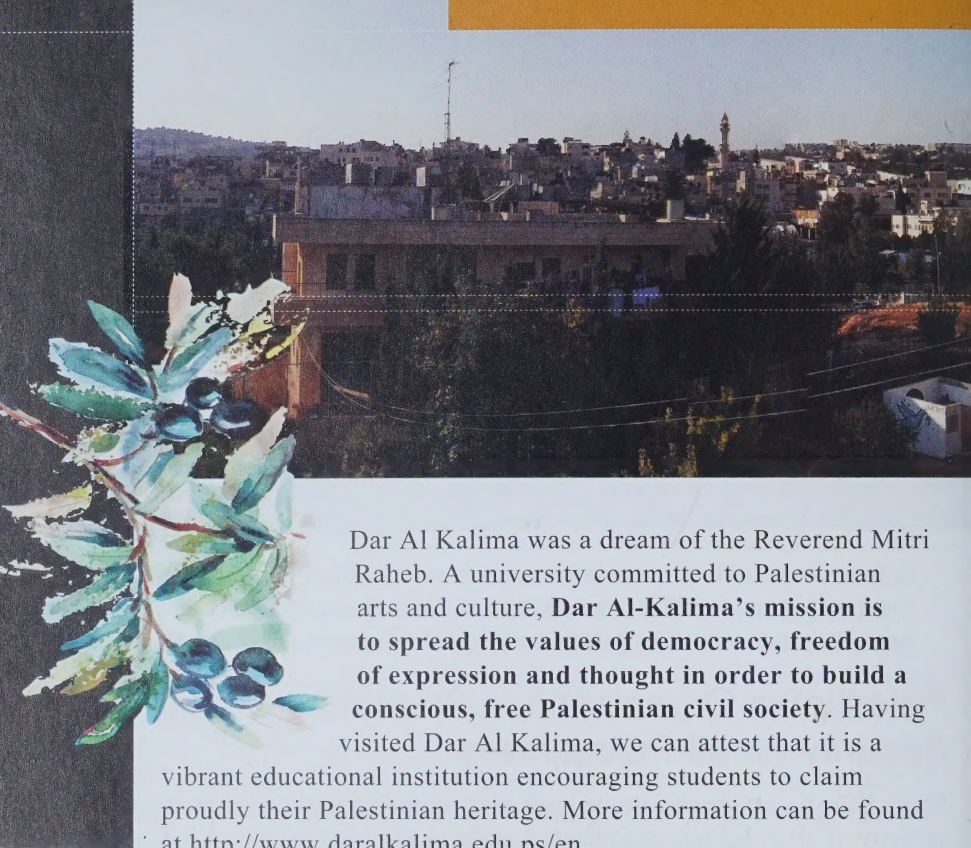
It is understood that in no other country are children systematically tried by juvenile military courts that, by definition, fall short of providing the necessary guarantees to ensure respect for their rights.¹⁵

Palestinian Organizations Promoting Dignity and Security for all Palestinians:

Many Palestinian organizations work hard to maintain the dignity and security of all Palestinians subjected to the oppression of occupation.

One such grassroots organization, **WI'AM a Palestinian Conflict Resolution/Transformation Centre in Bethlehem**, is committed to conflict transformation, restorative justice, and meditation. The latter is a type of meditation that focuses on the Arab tradition of reconciliation, Sulha. WI'AM also serves as a community centre for peace building, sustainable development, empowerment, and hope. You can find them at www.alaslah.org.

Unique is the work of Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh at the University of Bethlehem who with his wife Jessie has committed his professional and personal life to building a **Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH)** and the **Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS)**. He encourages young people to preserve the ecology of Palestine with numerous programs of Youth Education and Empowerment. He is also a writer and peace activist whose work and thinking can be found at <http://www.palestinenature.org> or at his personal website <http://qumsiyeh.org>.



Dar Al Kalima was a dream of the Reverend Mitri Raheb. A university committed to Palestinian arts and culture, **Dar Al-Kalima's mission is to spread the values of democracy, freedom of expression and thought in order to build a conscious, free Palestinian civil society.** Having visited Dar Al Kalima, we can attest that it is a vibrant educational institution encouraging students to claim proudly their Palestinian heritage. More information can be found at <http://www.daralkalima.edu.ps/en>.

Al-Haq is an independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organisation based in Ramallah, West Bank. Established in 1979 to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the organisation has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Further information on its work is found at www.alhaq.org/about-al-haq/vision-mission-and-goals.

Israeli Advocates for Palestinians rights:

B'TSELEM, AN ISRAELI HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1989, B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories works to end Israel's occupation in acknowledgment of the fact that ending the occupation regime is the only way to forge a future in which human rights, democracy, liberty, and equality are ensured to all persons living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean



Sea. B'Tselem is committed to documenting and publicizing human rights violations while also exposing the injustice, violence, and dispossession that lie at the very core of this regime of occupation, challenging its legitimacy in Israel and abroad and helping to expedite its end.

An independent, non-partisan organization, the name B'Tselem, literally means “in the image of” in Hebrew(Genesis 1:27): and is used as a synonym for human dignity. For more information go to <https://www.btselem.org/>.

Two Israeli organizations committed to Palestinian rights are **Zochrot**, an organization which has been fairly successful over the past few years in raising the Nakba to the awareness of the broad Jewish public(zochrot.org), and **Rabbis for Human Rights**, an Israeli human rights organization that describes itself as “the rabbinic voice of conscience in **Israel**” (rhr.org.il/eng/).

Initiatives directly supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC):

ECUMENICAL ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL (EAPPI)

EAPPI is a program of the World Council of Churches established in 2002 after the heads of Churches in Jerusalem called for a protective international presence in the Palestinian Territories. EAPPI supports Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent actions and advocacy efforts for a just peace, respect for human rights, and an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

Ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) come from around the world to spend three months in Palestine and Israel experiencing the impact of occupation on people's lives. They provide a protective presence to people and communities that experience the worst of the violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers' and the Israeli army.

Dozens of Canadians, in their 20s to their 70s, have volunteered as EA's and a least six have been Canadian Presbyterians. To learn more about EAPPI, go to www.eappi.org. To enquire about volunteering, contact the Rev. Glynis Williams, Associate Secretary, International Ministries at the Presbyterian Church in Canada (<http://presbyterian.ca/contact/staff/>).

PLANTING OLIVE TREES

In the PCC Gifts of Change pamphlet, this initiative is described in the following way: "Keep hope alive for farmers in Palestine by planting an olive tree. Olive trees are the basic source of livelihood and nutrition across the Mediterranean basin. They are also an ancient symbol of peace. Palestinian farmers have seen their mature trees uprooted, burned, and destroyed, depriving them of their income and their traditional way of life. Many of the trees are hundreds even thousands of years old."

The description continues "you can help the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine reach their goal of replanting 8,000 olive trees each year, replenishing the orchards of affected farmers." For information about purchasing an olive tree go to <http://presbyterian.ca/gifts%20of%20change>.

Individuals, old and young, are invited to come and take part in the annual olive harvest. It is an opportunity to meet Palestinian farmers and activists from around the world. Information can be found at <http://www.jai-pal.org/en/campaigns/olive-tree-campaign/olive-picking-program>.

STUDY TOURS OF PALESTINE

The Kairos Document 2009, a word of Faith, Hope and Love from the midst of Palestinian suffering invites Christians from around the world to come and see what it means to live under occupation. In response to their invitation, a sixth study tour sponsored by the PCC will take place from May 6–17, 2019. We are privileged once again to give leadership to this tour.

Over 10 days, we will visit many of the places and organizations listed above and in the previous three study sessions. To see places referred to in the Biblical story and to hear first-hand of the commitment of Palestinians, along with their Israeli supporters, to the well-being of their people whose ancestors inhabited this land since the time of Jesus, can be life-changing. So, come join us in 2019.

For more information, go to <http://presbyterian.ca/im/missiontrips/> or call Matt Foxall at 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 ext.259.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, AND SANCTIONS

While the PCC does not support a general boycott of Israeli goods, Justice Ministries does make available a list of goods that are produced, according to international law, in illegal Israeli settlements.

In addition, there is a recommendation from the 134th General Assembly "that presbyteries and congregations be encouraged to promote the purchase and distribution of products and services from the Occupied Palestinian Territories through organizations, such as the Zatoun organization, Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society, Holy Land Artisans, and the Alternative Tourism Group from Ramallah, both to assist the Palestinian people, and as a means of promoting awareness of the situation of Palestinians living in the occupied territories." To learn more, or for a list of Palestinian products and of those made in Israeli settlements that are available in Canada, go to <http://presbyterian.ca/justice/middle-east/>.



"In the absence of hope, we cry out our cry of hope."

Kairos Document

Conclusion when there is no conclusion:

Mindful of the words of Walter Wink, quoted earlier: "Whenever anyone steps out of the system and tells the truth, lives the truth—that enables everyone else to peer behind the curtain too.... If the main pillar of a system is living a lie, then it is not surprising that the fundamental threat to it is living the truth," it is only right that this study session end with words of lament from Palestinian Christians to Christians worldwide.

"In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here "a new land" and "a new human being" capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters."¹⁶

To this we can only say, Amen, may it be so.

Palestine / Israel

May 6-17, 2019

A Moment of Truth Witness Tour

Early Bird Registration Deadline: November 5, 2018

Participant Contribution: \$3500

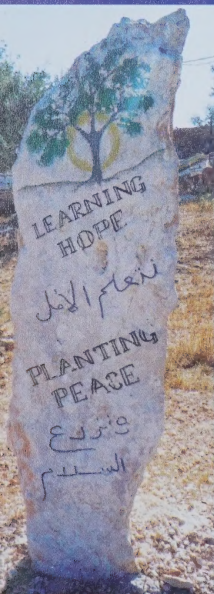
Registration Deadline: January 21, 2019

Participant contribution: \$4000

This tour, led by Noel and Dorcas Gordon, will help you begin to discover some of the complex issues in Israel and Palestine. Designed for ministers and lay leaders of all ages.



For more information go to
presbyterian.ca/missiontrips or contact:
Matt Foxall, Mission Trip Coordinator
mfoxall@presbyterian.ca • 1-800-619-7301 x259



- ¹ Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center is a Christian liberation theology organization based in Jerusalem. Every Thursday the Sabeel Centre sends out worldwide wave of prayer, asking the churches worldwide to remember and pray for the specific needs and concerns of the Palestinian Christian community.
- ² See William Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 215-232 for a full exposition of this parable. Quote from Walter Wink (*Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in an Age of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) is on pp. 228-229.
- ³ Elizabeth E. Johnson, *She Who is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), p. 23.
- ⁴ Johnson, *She Who is*, p.23.
- ⁵ <https://www.article1collective.org/2017/06/open-letter-from-christian-palestinians-to-the-world-council-of-churches-and-the-ecumenical-movement/>
- ⁶ <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-launches-report-israeli-practices-towards-palestinian-people-and-question-apartheid>
- ⁷ <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-launches-report-israeli-practices-towards-palestinian-people-and-question-apartheid>
- ⁸ Palestinian Update 129: palestineupdates11@gmail.com@mail184.suw121.mcdlv.net
- ⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/03/land-day-palestinians-walk-memories-150329121424807.html>
- ¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iqrit>
- ¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/15/return-iqrit-palestinian-village-israel>
- ¹² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-living-in-a-prison-though-i-have-the-key-1.5629025>
- ¹³ B/Tselem is a Jewish Human Rights group
- ¹⁴ Gerard Horton, "Breaking a Generation," in Naim Ateek, et al., *The Bible and the Palestine Israel Conflict* (Jerusalem: Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Centre, 2014), pp. 173-179 describe the process of arrest etc. ending with six recommendations.
- ¹⁵ UNICEF Report on Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations; https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf
- ¹⁶ The Kairos Document (2009), p. 12.

A Prayer for Mental Health

As many of you know, the Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly has provided many prayers over the past year. I share his prayer with you:

May 7–13, 2018 is Mental Health Week in Canada



The Canadian Mental Health Association has described Mental Health as having the following six characteristics.

- I feel like I'm reaching my potential.
- I feel like I belong.
- I make the world a better place.
- I don't worry too much about what others think of me.
- I enjoy my life.
- Knock me down and I'll get back up again.

The prayer that follows uses those six characteristics in combination with Biblical/theological images.

A PRAYER

God our Creator, you made human beings with bodies and minds, wills and emotions, and you desire that we be whole people physically and emotionally, spiritually and psychologically, mentally and relationally.

God of fellowship and community, in our creation we find our identity and our true value as persons, being made in your image. We rejoice that you have given us a place of belonging in your Son Jesus Christ, who has called us friends. Because of your Son's friendship, we are able to live free of constant worry about what others think of us. We give thanks for the community of

believers who support us, encourage us, and provide us with a shoulder to cry on. We thank you for the church.

God of purpose and intention, you have made us to enjoy the gift of life, eating, drinking, and taking pleasure in the tasks and work you give for our hands and minds to do. We thank you that you have described the purpose of our tasks: to seek justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you our God. We rejoice in the skills and abilities you give us; show us how to develop those abilities that you might use us in the advancement of your kingdom.

God of persistence and perseverance, the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives reminds us that we are your children. We thank you for those times when after we have been knocked down the Spirit has picked us up and put us back on our feet. We thank you for the resilience your Spirit gives us so that we are able to face the highs and lows of life with the confidence and hope that comes from the Spirit. Come to us each day by your Spirit that we may be strengthened for service in your coming kingdom.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whom to know is life and peace. Amen.

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Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D envisions a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

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Please give today.



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World Service
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50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301 ext. 291, **WeRespond.ca**

A New Day! Council 2018

by Colleen Wood

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.
John 21: 12-13 (NIV)

The WMS Council met at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre from Tuesday May 1 to Thursday May 3.

We began with a time of praise and then Southwestern Ontario Synodical led us in our opening worship. Using our theme, A New Day!, they reminded us that each and every day is a new beginning and a perfect gift from God. Following this, we had a time of games where we got to know each other better and enjoyed the gift of laughter.



In business, the financial budget was passed, and the auditor's report was approved. We also worked through the WMS Constitution and Bylaws, which was accepted with some minor changes.

During our evening, we enjoyed a wonderful presentation on Haiti by Alexis McKeown and Janet Brewer. Haiti is the poorest country in Western world, but just knowing that means you miss out on what makes Haiti interesting. Read more about Haiti in our cover article this month by Alexis McKeown, with reflections from others who participated in the WMS trip to Haiti in January 2018.



Council members were also encouraged, at their leisure, to participate in some stations about Haiti, including a prayer station and a colouring station. We also got to enjoy some Haitian cuisine: gingerbread cake and Haitian hot chocolate.

Our first day ended with Central Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda Synodical leading worship.

Wednesday, after a time of praise music, Quebec and Eastern Ontario led us in our opening worship centred around Joshua 1:9 "I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

This was the perfect introduction for our speaker, Pauline Brown. Pauline said that when she heard that verse shared this morning, she nearly leaped out of her chair. She reminded us that the Lord is with us wherever we go. It's true. She also reminded us that we don't learn from the good times, but the bad times.

Pauline began her time serving in India in 1954, working with the mobile medical units in Mendha and Barwani. She says that the community health work in Vindhya Satpura was some of the best in the area. Although this work is finished (and the government is doing more), now it is the churches that are flourishing. There are young Bhil pastors who care about the church and that are speaking out. There are strong leaders in the church because of the faithfulness of the church in Canada over the years. Many of the churches have expanded! (Last year they had over a thousand young people come for confirmation.) The congregations are growing and they work together in their building expansions and their programs.

Pauline says that these churches want to continue the rich partnership and relationship they have with the WMS and the PCC. She acknowledges all of those that went before her—planting, plowing, and watering. She says that she is enjoying the fruit. The people in her community love the Lord. They are strong. They are wonderful friends. She says to the WMS, “you have helped establish God’s church in this part of India and it is strong.”

Following this, Mary Jane Bisset led us in a Bible study on John 21:1–14. She had us reflect on this passage using *Lectio Divina* as a group.

We also heard from the Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He gave a very information presentation on Residential Schools and on Winnipeg water. An important piece of this discussion is that our understanding of time is fundamentally different than the Indigenous People’s understanding of time.

For example, in talking with Band 39 of Treaty 3, he found they kept

talking about the 13-point agreement. He discovered this agreement was from 1902, but to the Indigenous Peoples it is not given a date because it is a living document. It is as alive now as it was in 1902. It has changed how he thinks. Elders speak about a treaty in the present tense—they live now. We as settlers, tend to think in chronological terms—it is past so why is it relevant?

Peter also reminded us that we need to continue to issue our apology. He had the honour of speaking on behalf of the church at the site of the Cecelia Jeffrey school. He was heckled as he spoke. Yet, after lunch, the person who heckled him approached him and thanked him. This individual said he was still mad at the church, but thanked Peter for his apology. It is important that the words of apology be given in person as we continue to move forward.

Rev. Ian Ross McDonald, Executive Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, was our next speaker. Today, he was speaking on behalf of the Rev. Glynis Williams who could not be with us as she was in Malawi.



Ian says that mission is done in a community by communities. It is always focused towards hope.

International Ministries recruits and send mission staff overseas, provides grants for projects in partner churches, and provides leadership development grants (which help individuals serve their church and community in their own countries.)

Stephen Allen, Executive Secretary of Justice Ministries, then talked about his work. He says that Healing and Reconciliation became part of justice ministry during his time and it has overwhelmed the department in a good way. He was delighted when it became part of justice ministries, though he wasn't hired as an expert in indigenous issues. He says it has been a journey for him—partly a journey in humility.

That evening, we enjoyed a wonderful dramatic presentation by Laurie Atkins. Through music and word, Laurie shared the story of Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan, his best friend.

On Thursday, the Rev. Peter Bush

reflected on his year as moderator. He has shared prayers regularly with the denomination and has had an overwhelming response to these (read one of these prayer on p. 40 of this *Glad Tidings*.)

He also spoke of his trip to Taiwan. Within The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), 40% of its members are in Indigenous communities. In Taiwan itself, the population that is Christian makes up only 5–6% of the population, but within the Indigenous communities, 50% are Christian.

He says that the PCT are missionary entrepreneurs. They are prepared to do whatever it takes for the gospel to spread. For example, the McKay hospital of the PCT has three branches and claims to have the largest chaplaincy program in the world with 17 full-time chaplains and 400 volunteers on the Christian side. They have a premier burn unit and perform the best palate surgery in Asia.

Peter also led us in worship with communion, and installed the 2018–19 WMS Council Executive.



In the Society

Presbyterial

London Presbyterial held their 104th Annual Meeting on January 18 at Knox Presbyterian Church, Fingal ON. After being welcomed with refreshments, President Valerie Shaw constituted the meeting and introduced our theme: Mission in Action. The Rev. Jon Van Den Berg, our host minister, and Debra Webster, led our sing-song.

Secretary Cathy Reid conducted our roll call and read the 2017 annual meeting minutes. The treasurer and group reports followed.

The Rev. Theresa McDonald Lee updated us on Camp Kintail and showed us pictures to highlight the new building. She then led a Bible study. In small groups, we discussed Mission Ways—how each of our congregation works on and plans mission activities.

After a delicious lunch and another sing-song, the Knox St. Andrew's Evening Fellowship led the Worship and In Memoriam. Millie Evans, Joan McKeen, Rev. Gloria Langlois, and Marian Weldon were remembered for their work and their love of serving God.

Cathy Reid, our guest speaker, showed us slides as she took us through the mission trip she took to Malawi. It was an enlightening day

as we all shared how Mission can be accomplished through Action.

~Elaine Brown

Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon hosted the Spring Meeting of the **Lindsay** Presbyterial on March 21 with 21 women present. After coffee, muffins, and registration, Gathering Music called us to the sanctuary where Pam Noble of the Knox executive team welcomed everyone. The women from Glenarm shared a devotion on Change based on Malachi 3:6. Lizz Hoyle, President, then chaired the business meeting. Our attention was drawn to the vacancies in the executive.

Nancy Briggs of Beacan Presbyterian in Beaverton spoke on plans for a picnic at Camp Kirk on May 20 for our next meeting. Camp Kirk is a Lion's Club Camp for Children with Learning Disabilities near Kirkfield. We will bring a 'fancy' wrapped box lunch to be auctioned and the proceeds will go to Camp Kirk.

Nancy also spoke of her mission trip with Beacan Presbyterian in February. Eighteen members flew to San Diego and traveled to the Youth with a Mission campus at San Antonio Del Mare Mexico. They went on a "build" and finished a home for a family of six.

Remembering

Betty Larter
Westminster-St. Paul's
Presbyterian Church
Guelph ON

Iva Capling
Lorene Miller
St. Andrew's WMS
Kitchener ON

Julia Ranson
Dorothy Lukes Auxiliary
WMS,
Knox Presbyterian
Midland ON

Helen Graham
Knox Centre Road
Presbyterian Church
Parkhill ON

Elaine Leblanc
Nora Seaton WMS,
Paterson Memorial
Presbyterian Church
Sarnia ON

Margaret Woolford
St. Mark's Presbyterian
Toronto ON

The Presbyterian was invited to join The Wednesday Midweek Lenten Service at Knox. The congregation

and the Presbyterian shared a lunch of soup and bread after the service.

~Linda Taylor



Comox Valley Presbyterian Church has been using the *Glad Tidings* study on Palestine. A group of 25 has gathered and found the study helpful in understanding the complicated history and in listening to the Palestinian story.



Shine

Matthew 5:14-16

Regional Women's Gathering
Vancouver, BC



**Join us for the 2019 Regional Women's
Gathering in Vancouver, BC!**

DATE: March 29-30, 2019

**PLACE: Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel Surrey,
British Columbia**

REGISTRATION FEES:
\$225 before November 15, 2018

\$275 after November 15, 2018
and before February 15, 2019

INQUIRIES:
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Glad Tidings

September/October 2018



*Happy
Thanksgiving!*



24 Thanksgiving! Worship by Debbie Stewart

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Glad Tidings

September/October 2018

Volume 92, No. 5

EDITOR: Colleen Wood

DESIGN: Alexis McKeown

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Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *Glad Tidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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If you are a regular reader of *Glad Tidings*, you know that I try to have regular quiet time with God. You also know, it is something that I struggle with. Amidst changing routines, exhausting schedules, and a lack of discipline, I seem to get out of the routine all too often. Even when I am in the routine, sometimes I find myself rushing through my devotions. I have a ‘get it done’ kind of personality, and sometimes even my quiet time falls into this category.

That’s why I loved reading Mission in Action in this edition of *Glad Tidings*. Members of the Ngudradrekai churches in Taiwan are covenanting to read and write out portions of the Ngudradrekai Bible. It might seem odd to want to write out portions of the scripture when we could easily just print it off, but it struck me as something that would slow me down, and help me focus more on the words of the scriptures. For the Ngudradrekai churches, it not only slows them down, but it brings them together. It not only increases their knowledge of God’s word, but of their own language. I love what we can learn from our partner churches around the world.

So, inspired by our friends in the Ngudradrekai church, and in an attempt to slow myself down, I am going to begin writing out the scriptures this month. I already have a prayer journal, so am ready to go. I will begin with 1, 2, and 3 John because I find the books inspiring, and I think their short length will inspire me to keep going.

As the *Glad Tidings* articles come in each month, I often find something new and inspiring in them. I hope you do to. Whether it is a worship service that connects you with God, a poem that builds you up, or some new piece of knowledge that motivates you to act, I hope each edition of *Glad Tidings* changes you, just a little. WMS meetings can do the same. So, this month, I challenge you to continue to grow and be changed, and invite someone else along for the journey. Consider giving someone a gift subscription to *Glad Tidings* and inviting them out to your September WMS meeting. It might just change the both of you!

The **JOY** of the **HARVEST**

by Rebecca Sherbino
and Colleen Graham



"Statistics show that the income support people receive on

the Ontario Disability Support Program is around 40% below the

poverty line, so it's not in any way easy to live on the stipend."

I love the Old Testament Story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz—a story of tragedy, but also of hope, romance, and God's faithfulness.

One part of the story that particularly intrigues me is when

Ruth, a young widow, comes to gather barley from a stranger's field. She gathers the grain that is left behind by the reapers as they are harvesting. When Boaz, the owner of the field, asks about her, he's told that she is a widowed foreigner in need of food. He continues to allow her to follow his men as they reap and even tells them to pull some grain out of the bundles and leave it for her to gather. He also provides for her safety by allowing her to stay with the other young workers, who offer her protection from the possibility of being molested on



a stranger's property. However, he doesn't particularly help her out or give her assistance other than making it possible for her to work.

We're told in the Biblical account that the reason that Boaz is so kind to Ruth is because he has heard stories of Ruth's unconditional love for her mother-in-law Naomi, and the kindness she has shown her after the death of Naomi's husband and two sons (one of whom is Ruth's husband). But I'm left wondering... if Boaz knew she was in need, why didn't he just give her the food and grain? Why continue to make her gather barley when he could have afforded to provide for her needs?

I'm convinced that there is meaning and joy for us in work and that being involved in work is part of God's plan for us. Even in Genesis, before the curse, God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to "cultivate it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15)—to participate in the harvest.

I'm concerned that, in Canada, we've taken away the joy of work from some of those who are in need. This has happened sometimes with the best of intentions. Let me explain.

We have an amazing social assistance safety net that provides for people when they are in crisis. Don't get me wrong though—the monthly stipend is low. Statistics show that the income support people receive on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is around

40% below the poverty line, so it's not in any way easy to live on the stipend. (K. Tiessen *Ontario's Social Assistance Policy Gap*, 2016) But, compared to where I lived for five years in Sudan and Malawi, Africa where there was no social assistance and people starved to death, it is, at least, a basic net. In Ontario, we have two types of social supports for people who experience joblessness and financial need—Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). OW provides income support and employment assistance to those who are in temporary financial need, while the ODSP is a long-term income and employment support for those that have a disability. This is an absolute necessity for individuals with a disability or mental illness that significantly impacts their ability to work, look after themselves, or get out in the community.

My concern is the middle group of people on social assistance. There are those with a disability or mental illness that are capable of work and, in



learn to do good; seek justice...

There are those with a disability or mental illness that are capable of work and, in fact, WANT to work and participate in their community.

fact, WANT to work and participate in their community. This is especially salient when people are struggling to meet their basic needs on the ODSP stipend and can't make ends meet.

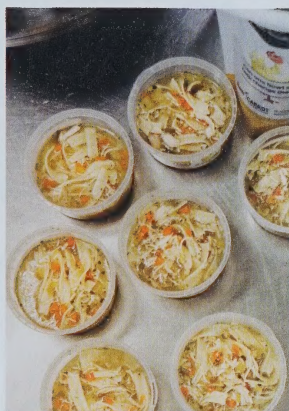
Many churches (including ours) have developed outreach programs to try to meet the gap: community meals, benevolence funds, grocery cards, and food banks. We are working with the best of intentions to honour Jesus and "...seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isaiah 1:17). These programs

are a gift—a fragrant offering for those that are marginalized and in need in our communities.

But, sometimes, these programs can be an easy out. Give money (or a grocery card or casserole) and send people on their way.

The challenge is that people are living under the poverty line and a grocery card, food bank donation, or community meal is not going to assist them for very long. It is a short-term solution to a long-term need. We may find ourselves frustrated that people come back to the church, month after





month, looking for “crisis support” when, in fact, they need more. They need more money to live on, and for debt relief, friendship, community and, possibly, meaningful work (a harvest!) to contribute to and participate in.

I’ve never felt more purposeless or lost than when I had quit a job I was working at because I felt that God was calling me out of it, but hadn’t yet called me into anything else. For six months, I was unemployed. I felt like I had nothing to talk about. People didn’t know what to say next when I responded to their “What do you do?” question with my “I’m in between jobs” answer. This period in my life, although difficult, was invaluable for me to realize what it must be like for others who are also jobless, through no fault of their own, but who want to contribute to something.

This brings me full circle to the food banks and grocery card dilemma. While these are a great

means of offering crisis support, I hope we, as The Church, are also willing to do more. I’ve become convinced that employment and participation in a type of “harvest activity” is the “more” that many people want and need. Meaningful work meets so many of our needs in life: socialization, belonging, purpose, dignity, and income. There are almost 500,000 people in Ontario, who are on the Ontario Disability Support Program and many of these individuals want to, and CAN, work. So, how do we open that door? How can we, like Boaz, leave some of the grain behind for others to harvest?

When our family lived in Africa, we were advised to enlist “help.” We quickly realized that even if we didn’t want to have help, it was viewed as shameful to try to complete everything yourself when you could afford to provide a job for someone else. In fact, most Malawians, even those with very little money, have



help. It may be more of a bartering or exchange than a paid job, but they provide a job for someone who needs one and they share the load with others. I found it very difficult to have help. We had a part-time nanny/housekeeper, a gardener, a guard and, for a short time, a cook. With my North American mentality, this seemed extensive and wasteful. I should be doing things myself! At the very least, my own housekeeping and cooking. But, I came to acknowledge that it seemed absurd to run myself ragged when there were people desperately in need of a job and an income. In fact, we came to feel that if anyone came to our gate asking for money, we would try to give them a job, even a temporary one, and pay them for it. This took far more effort than just handing them some money

so that they would go on their way. I was challenged to think through how I could “help” people.

In the book *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupkin, he states:

“Little affirms human dignity more than honest work. One of the surest ways to destroy self-worth is subsidizing the idleness of able-bodied people. Work is a gift, a

calling, a human responsibility.”

Boaz gave Ruth a gift when he allowed her to harvest his land. Even though she was poor and a widow, she must have been capable of work (the Biblical passage mentions that the other labourers noticed that she worked hard all day). Maybe we, as the hands and feet of Jesus, need to look beyond the handout sometimes, and try to provide a “hand-up”. Yard work? A part-time job? A position for someone with a



disability even if it means less profit for ourselves?

Isn't that what Jesus was all about? Not the easy way, or the profit-driven way, but the sacrificial way.

Rebecca Sherbino and Colleen Graham are the Co-Founders and Directors of The Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise, a social enterprise (business/ministry) that "stirs up" meaningful employment for individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program through cooking gourmet soup.

The Raw Carrot partners with churches and non-profits to start their own Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise and employ individuals in their communities. There are currently three Raw Carrot locations in Southwestern Ontario employing 16 people with more on the way. The Raw Carrot is supported by a Specialized Ministry grant from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We would love to see more churches employ marginalized people across Canada. Intrigued? Check out the website: www.therawcarrot.com or contact us at info@therawcarrot.com.

Isn't that what Jesus was all about? Not the easy way, or the profit-driven way, but the sacrificial way.



Food for the Spirit

Dinner Church blends worship, fellowship, and faith.

by Connie Wardle



A menu isn't usually the first thing you see when you come to church. But on Wednesday evenings at Knox in Oakville, Ontario, you'll find a

dinner menu surrounded by nametags and an array of markers, encouraging you to introduce yourself even before you've said a word.

The church hall has become a banquet hall tonight, with white-draped tables arranged in a semi-circle, and a colourful head table adorned with bright scarves and a burning Christ candle. Each guest—for we're all guests this evening at the table of the Lord—is encouraged to light a smaller candle using the Christ candle's flame. As people congregate and our gathering grows in size, so too does the light emanating from the candles. It's a visible expression of a theological truth—Christ's light is expanding among us. We eat together tonight in community and as an act of worship, and we believe that Christ himself is present among us.

Dinner Church began last September as something of an experiment. It's modelled off the worship service at St. Lydia's in Brooklyn, and blends together some ancient practices of the early church and some modern elements of life today. Attendance has grown steadily, with 30 to 40 people gathering each week from a range of ages and church experiences. There's almost always at least one new face around the table.

"This is a crazy commuter town," says Rev. Jacqui Foxall, minister at Knox Oakville. "How often do you actually sit down and eat with the people you love? And so we wanted to create that atmosphere. But not just dinner—we wanted it to be worship,

too. And so we worked hard to create that environment using ancient liturgy, and bringing it together to get that ancient and modern feel."

The team drew inspiration not only from Acts 2, with its depiction of the early followers of the Way devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (verse 42), but also from the *Didache*, an early Christian text offering guidance on life and liturgy.

When the time for dinner and worship arrives, we become quieter. We begin with a call to worship and prayer, and the blessing and breaking of bread. The common loaf, which is shared among us, is the first taste of the feast to come, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, and the first part of the Sacrament of Communion. Our worship will be bookended on the other side of our meal of barbecued sausages and pasta salad by a time of teaching, and singing, and the sharing of the Communion cup.

"There's something about the worship and there's something about the food, and then the Holy Spirit gets in here like that wind and fire and does things that no worship team can plan for," says Rev. Jacqui. "And I think that's where the strength of it is."

Dinner Church is intentionally low tech. There are no screens or hymn books. There aren't even bulletins.

The songs are simple, and sometimes the lyrics are written on a flipchart to help people learn them. But the music is intimate and acoustic, and the songs are chosen with the hope that people will be able to sing them thoughtfully without having to focus on what comes next.

Music is the “salt and pepper” of the service, says John Kirstein, who leads the Knox band. Part of the overall ethos as a music leader, he says, is that “this is something you create together...your participation creates your experience, rather than having the hymnal and choir in front of you.”

And it’s true when you’re used to singing in a traditional service, with an organ to back you up, you feel exposed and uncomfortable with only the subtler guitars and John’s accordion. But even that awkwardness can be good, he says. Comfort levels increase when people are “just a little more relaxed. It’s okay to not sound perfect.”

The unplugged, paper-free worship style was an intentional choice by the team. It’s meant to keep people focused on each other, without anything in the way.

“The community was the biggest driving force,” says Jayne Thomson, an elder and a leader in Knox’s worship team. “We had a vision to bring community together, to throw tech out the door, to make eye contact again.”

That’s a touchstone for Dinner Church: Community. Connection. Simplicity. Approachability. Even



the minister's messages are more like teaching times, with back-and-forth conversation.



"It's something a little more than a Bible study, but it's not quite a full, Sunday morning, pull-out-all stops kind of worship," Rev. Jacqui says. "It's somewhere in between. It's kind of neat. Plus you get food."

Rich Spriggs likens the experience of Dinner Church to a family dinner. He's been attending since November, when a coffee chum (who also happens to be a minister-in-association at Knox) invited him to come. Since then he's become a regular at Sunday morning services, too. He helps serve coffee and tea at fellowship time, and has used his skills as a cook at a local





Advice on Starting a Dinner Church

I asked some of the members of the planning team if they had any advice for other churches that may want to try something like Dinner Church. Here are some of their suggestions:

Know your congregation's comfort level, especially when it comes to participatory worship. Ease into this different way of worshipping and having fellowship together. It helps a lot if they trust the team and the minister to guide them.

With the meals, be super organized. Ideally, one person should be responsible for planning and providing the dinners—either by cooking the food themselves, or ensuring someone is assigned to provide the food each week.



pub to prepare food for a few Dinner Church services. He even formally became a member of Knox in May. “We’re one big family,” he says. “And one happy family.”

“You feel the Holy Spirit’s presence here,” says Phil Kehoe, who is attending Dinner Church for the second time. “We’re all made for this. God made us for fellowship. How

beautiful and sweet this is, to meet like this.”

“I know there are people who come on Wednesday nights for whom dining is a lonely experience most nights of the week,” says Rev. Jacqui. “So the food tastes better when we eat it together. ... Just like something happens to the bread and the wine when we break it, something happens to this food when we share it together, and we’re not lonely for just a minute. We’re not lonely anymore.”

For one evening each week, bodies are nourished, souls are filled, and Christ hosts his people with bread and cup, prayer and song—a dinner party for the family of God in one corner of the Kingdom.

Connie Wardle is an elder and church administrator at Knox Presbyterian Church in Oakville, ON.

With the worship, just do it. Plan the services, but feel free to experiment and see what happens.

Choose simple songs. Consider repeating the same songs for a few weeks so people who come consistently are able to learn them.

Make good food. As Jayne Thomson noted: “The element of worshipping over a meal is new to everyone. But the element of eating a good meal with friends is not new to anyone.”

Keep it accessible. Dinner Church should be hospitable, and anyone should be able to join in—no church experience required.



Agriculture Education in Malawi

by Shaylyn McMahon

The worst crop that Henry Reinders, a Presbyterian farmer in Meaford, Ontario, has ever produced was last year's hay crop.

"In order to make dry hay you need at least three consecutive days of dry weather and we rarely got that," says Reinders. "Last year was the wettest summer I've ever experienced."

Photo (left): Meaford, Ontario farmer Henry Reinders (left) with Pressings Moyo (right), a Malawian farmer who hosted Reinders for three nights in his home. Reinders saw firsthand how agricultural training supported by the Foodgrains Bank enabled Moyo to grow enough food to feed his family. (Photo: Shaylyn McMahon)

Thankfully, Reinder's customers still accepted his hay.

"I've been very fortunate and never had a situation where a poor crop has affected me financially," he says.

That's not the case for many farmers around the world, though.

"In Malawi, farmers feel the effects of crop failure and climate change quite differently," says Reinders, who recently returned home from visiting small-scale farmers affected by hunger in Malawi through a learning tour organized by Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Reinders has organized the Bighead River growing project near Meaford for over 20 years. Through the project, Reinders farms around 40 acres of land. Once harvested, he sells the crop and donates the proceeds to the Foodgrains Bank for its work in ending world hunger.

Local churches, including a number of Presbyterian churches, help cover the costs of seeds and fertilizer by fundraising through offerings, church dinners, concerts, and other events.

The trip was an opportunity for Reinders to see first-hand how their contributions are used.

"I wanted to get a sense of how the growing project and what we were

doing here impacted others around the world," he says.

He was particularly interested in visiting projects by Foodgrains Bank member Presbyterian World Service & Development.

"Being Presbyterian, when I saw that the learning tour was going to Malawi, I knew they had a strong Presbyterian presence in Malawi so I was eager to go," he says.

Reinders learned that many Malawian farmers are dealing with increasingly unpredictable weather patterns like prolonged drought and erratic rainfall. Producing a viable crop can be difficult.

"The farmers I met are dealing with one or two acres, and if they have a poor yield it totally devastates them—they have nothing to eat and they're searching for ways to get money to buy food," he says.

As part of the tour, Reinders stayed in the home of Pressings Moyo, a farmer who participated in an agricultural training project through Presbyterian World Service & Development.

"Before the project, Pressings' family was always short of food and they only ate leafy vegetables like cabbage and pumpkin leaves. He had no energy to work," explains Reinders.

Through the project, Moyo learned sustainable soil management techniques that helped him grow more and better food.

“Since receiving the training, Pressings and his family have moved from being hungry to having extra food to sell in eight short years,” says Reinders.

Many of the techniques that Malawian farmers are learning through the Foodgrains Bank are similar to farming techniques used by

Canadian farmers, says Reinders.

“Precision planting is becoming a buzz word in Canadian agriculture,” he says. “And I couldn’t help but think that’s exactly what Malawian farmers are learning to do, except manually. The farmers I met were learning to plant seeds in specific spacing and to put fertilizer between the plants in specific amounts.”

They were also being trained to incorporate conservation agriculture techniques in their farming.



Conservation agriculture is a farming approach that uses minimal soil disturbance, crop rotations, mulching, and cover crops to improve soil health and fertility and increase production.

“That was interesting to hear because I’m practising reduced tillage and more soil coverage too,” says Reinders. “Rather than physically putting coverage like they do in Malawi, we use different tillage practices that leave more residue

from previous crops. It’s the same principle.”

It was encouraging for Reinders to see the impact these different farming techniques are having on the lives of Malawian farmers.

“As a farmer, because I’m so directly tied to food production and I see what the land means to other farmers, I think it’s important that we share what we know to help those who are less fortunate,” he says.

He also saw the impact Canadian Christians can have when they live out God’s call to love your neighbour.

“I have always thought that my role in helping hungry people and my gift in being able to farm was something that God blessed me with, and that I have a responsibility to share,” says Reinders. “I’ve always been very fortunate in my farming life, I’ve had good success at it, and that success to me translates into my doing something for somebody else.”

This year, Reinders planted wheat and soybeans as part of the Bighead River growing project. After seeing the impact of Canadian support in Malawi, he is eager to continue doing his part to help those who are hungry overseas.

“It gives me great hope that we can help many more farmers—many more people—in countries like Malawi become self-sufficient and food secure.”

Shaylyn McMahon is the Communications Assistant at Canadian Foodgrains Bank.



PWS&D Responds to Urgent Needs in

AFRICA



by Karen Bokma

An unprecedented number of people across the African continent are in need due to natural disaster and violent conflict. While these crises might not make their way into the mainstream media, the need is no less real. So many are being affected by disasters not of their own making.

The Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in the grip of ethnic and political violence, and families have had no choice but to leave their homes and possessions behind in search of safety.

Agnès Ntumba remembers fleeing the violence in Kasai with her husband and seven children. “I saw people being killed. They were

coming to kill us and we had to escape,” Agnès shared.

With her family and others from her village, Agnès ran for the bush and walked for two days to reach safety. They have now settled in an area where there are no formal camps for displaced people. As such, Agnès and her family are living with a host family—a total of 20 people living together.

When they initially settled there, the family was only able to eat once a day. Since then, Presbyterian World Service & Development, with members of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, has supported food distributions. Packages containing flour, beans, oil, and salt are feeding 4,000 people.

Agnès cooked the beans as soon as they received them, as the family hadn't had beans in quite some time. She says that because of the distributions, her family will now be able to eat more than one meal a day. "We believe that our life will change with this aid," she shares.

These food distributions are especially important in areas without official displaced persons camps because they help reduce the tension and dependency on local hosts. Food aid also helps prevent people from being exploited and forced to work for less than they should, just to be able to support their families.

Ongoing violent conflict in both Sudan and South Sudan has also caused widespread trauma and left

many without the necessities for survival. In Darfur alone, over one million people remain internally displaced due to violent clashes between armed groups and the government that have been going on for years. PWS&D has committed funds to an ACT Alliance project providing relief in the form of water, sanitation, shelter, and education to around 450,000 people in need.

In parts of Somalia, environmental disasters are taking a toll. Above average rainfall has caused flash floods in some areas, while drought persists in others. Families, in the hundreds of thousands, forced to leave their homes, are facing malnutrition and disease, in desperate need of food, drinking water, sanitation services, and shelter.

Agnès Ntumba and her family share a pot of beans made from supplies that were part of a food distribution.



Photo: MCC/Mulanda Jimmy Juma

Since rains failed for the second consecutive year in Somalia, Barwaqa Mohamed Ahmed—like Agnès Ntumba in DRC—has been able to feed her children only one meal a day. Part of a community of pastoralists, Barwaqa and her family move with the seasons—taking their livestock to fresh water and green pastures wherever they can find them.

Prolonged drought means having to travel further and further in order to feed and water their animals. Seeds planted in dry ground have not grown without rain to nourish them.

Through a PWS&D and Foodgrains Bank-supported

program to screen young children for malnutrition, Barwaqa learned that two of her three children are malnourished. They are now receiving fortified peanut paste and nutrient-enriched food to help regain their strength and weight, ensuring they grow properly. Programs like this are essential in an area where almost 25 per cent of children are suffering from acute or severe malnutrition.

With the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, PWS&D is responding to meet the immediate needs of the hungry and displaced. In partnership with these ecumenical networks, PWS&D is able to respond

Photo below: Mothers wait to have their children screened for malnutrition in Somalia. Children will receive therapeutic food treatments if diagnosed as malnourished



Photo: Will Swanson

in parts of the world where we do not have existing partnerships. Contributions to the project also go much further, as matching funds are accessed whenever possible as part of our response.

To contribute to the relief response, visit WeRespond.ca/ donate and mark your donation "Africa Relief."

Photo above: Kapinga Abeti's village in DRC was attacked by militia and she was forced to flee from her home. She and her children are receiving food packages which are helping them survive.

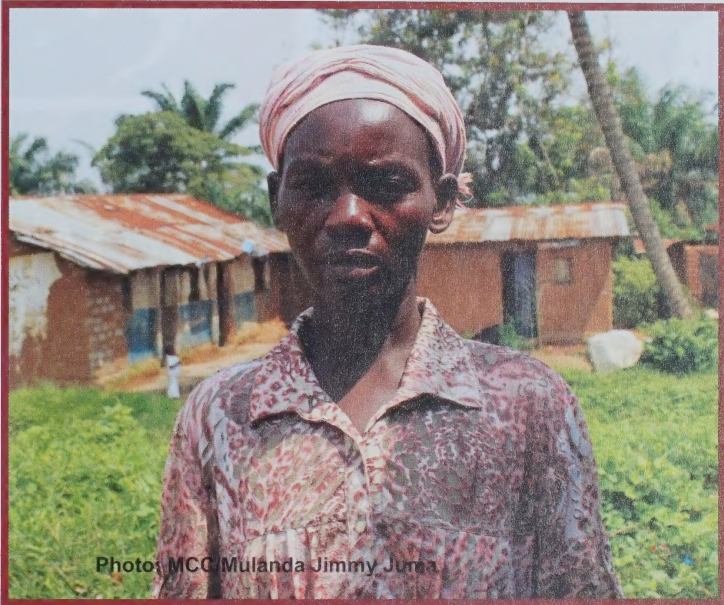


Photo: MCC/Mulanda Jimmy Juma





Thanksgiving!

by Debbie Stewart

Call to Worship:

Let those who favour my cause sing out with joy and be glad; let us say always, "God is Great." Our tongues will be talking of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long. Let us worship God.

Hymn # 64: Be still and know that I am God

Prayer of Adoration:

Your praise is ever on our lips, O God. Songs of joy rise within us. We look at creation and see your goodness; we hear of your promise and discover righteousness. Your love is boundless, you care for us without limits.

In this time of worship, we bow down before you with glad adoration. We pray that you would receive our worship and accept our thanksgiving. All these things we pray through Jesus Christ your son our Lord, amen.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 53:7–12

Mark 10:35–45

Hymn # 626: Lord of all power

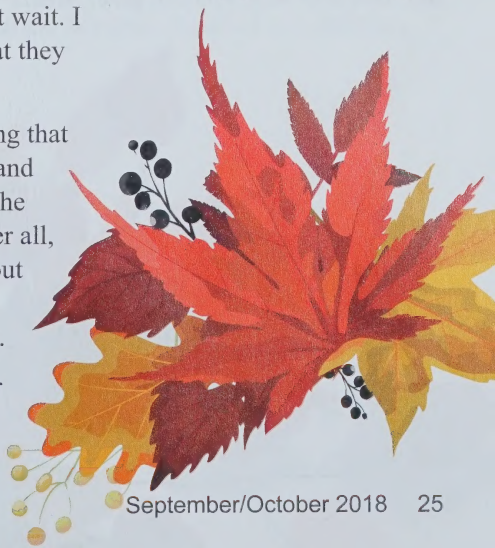
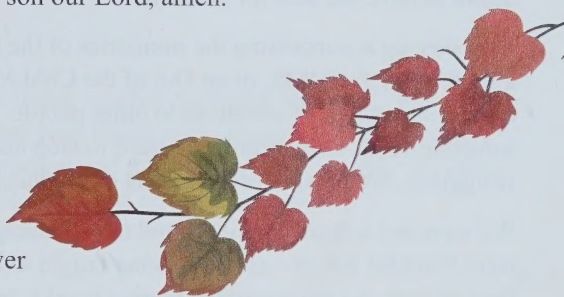
Reflection: Being Truly Thankful

It is an easy thing to always want one more thing and to forget what we have. We often forget to be thankful for what we have, especially in today's world. We are living in a society where we have very little patience. We want things now and we don't have time to wait. Life is too busy to slow down and wait for anything.

Two of the disciples were looking ahead and wanted to get their chance to be seated by Jesus—on the right and left of him. They were anxious to claim their spot. Think about how today someone might call 'shot gun' to get the best seat in the car; even before they see the car, they claim the front passenger seat. Or think of the child who sneaks the best-looking cookie off the cooling rack, so no one else will get it. They might hide it away to be certain they get it, unwilling to see how things might turn out if they just wait. I know of siblings who would be upset that they didn't do that first.

In our story from Mark, it is not surprising that the other disciples are upset with James and John. Why wouldn't they be upset with the two who tried to get ahead of them? After all, were they not all equal? Jesus taught about fairness, about serving others, and about having compassion and mercy for others.

As followers of Christ, we know that our work is to serve others, to help people to see a new way of life through faith.



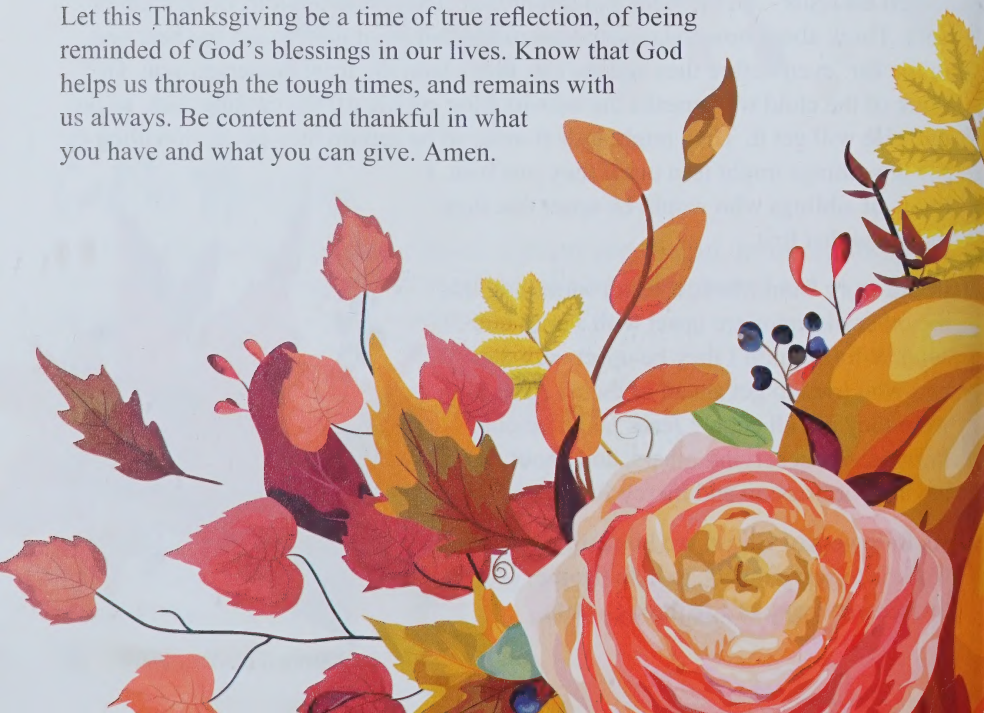
We are to know a God of love—not punishment We know a God of grace—not judgement. How can we truly serve others today? How can we leave behind our desire to have the best for ourselves?

Yes, serving is supporting the ministries of the church, whether it be the work of a food bank, the WMS, or an Out of the Cold Ministry. But, it is more. We need to give something of ourselves to other people. We need to truly listen when someone needs to be heard. We need to stop and help a person who seems to be struggling. We need to preform acts of kindness, expecting nothing in return.

We were not a family to sit around our Thanksgiving meal and say one thing we were thankful for. We grew up being taught to be thankful all of the time. This time of year, we are reminded to give thanks, to truly be aware of all that we have. We are not to be wanting more, but to be content and thankful for what we do have.

Jesus reminded the disciples that it was not his place to give them those seats. They were for those for whom they were prepared. We are not to seek out the best seats, but we do know that each of us has a special place in the family of God. A place meant just for us. A place where we can give thanks for the gifts God has given us. Gifts like kindness, acceptance, compassion, mercy, and grace.

Let this Thanksgiving be a time of true reflection, of being reminded of God's blessings in our lives. Know that God helps us through the tough times, and remains with us always. Be content and thankful in what you have and what you can give. Amen.



Offering

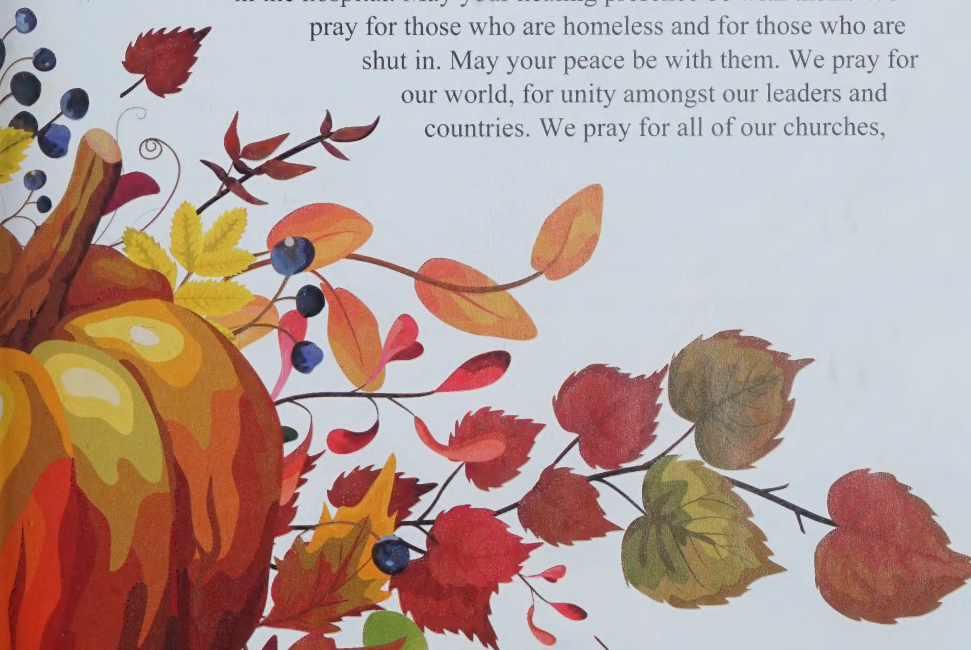
Offertory Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we truly thank you for our many blessings. We humbly come before you asking that your blessing be placed upon these gifts that they would be used towards mission and ministry for your people. All these things we pray through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Loving and Gracious God, we truly give you thanks for the many blessings we have in our lives. We give you thanks for our families and friends, for the love that we have for one another. We thank you for the beauty of your creation, for the bounty that we now enjoy from our gardens planted, and for the harvest of many trees planted. We give you thanks for your love for us and for the freedom you give us in making our own choices. We especially thank you for the gift of your son, who died on the cross, leaving us with hope eternal.

God of all mercy and compassion, we come before you on behalf of those who are in need. We pray for those who are sick, whether they are at home or in the hospital. May your healing presence be with them. We pray for those who are homeless and for those who are shut in. May your peace be with them. We pray for our world, for unity amongst our leaders and countries. We pray for all of our churches,





our mission workers, and our mission work in Canada and around the world.

We pray for all of these things through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who taught us how to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

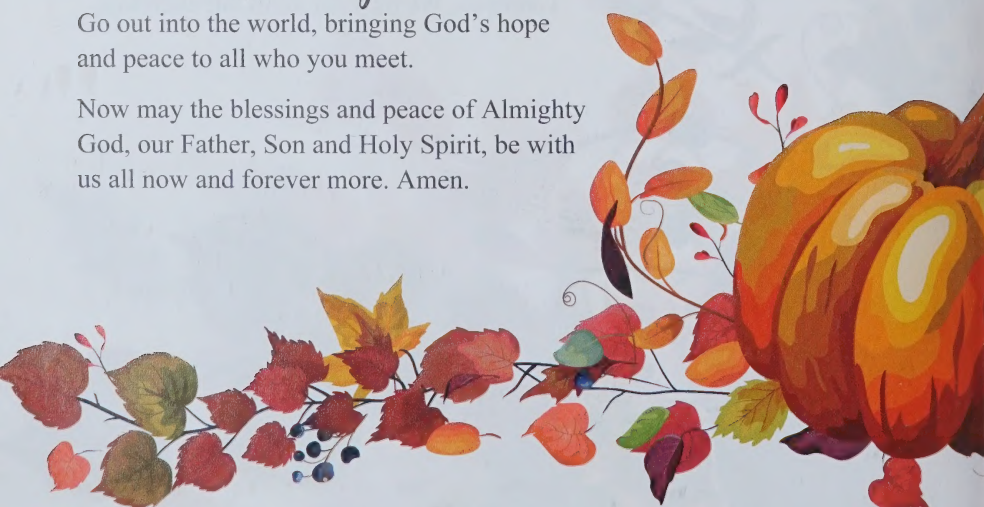
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

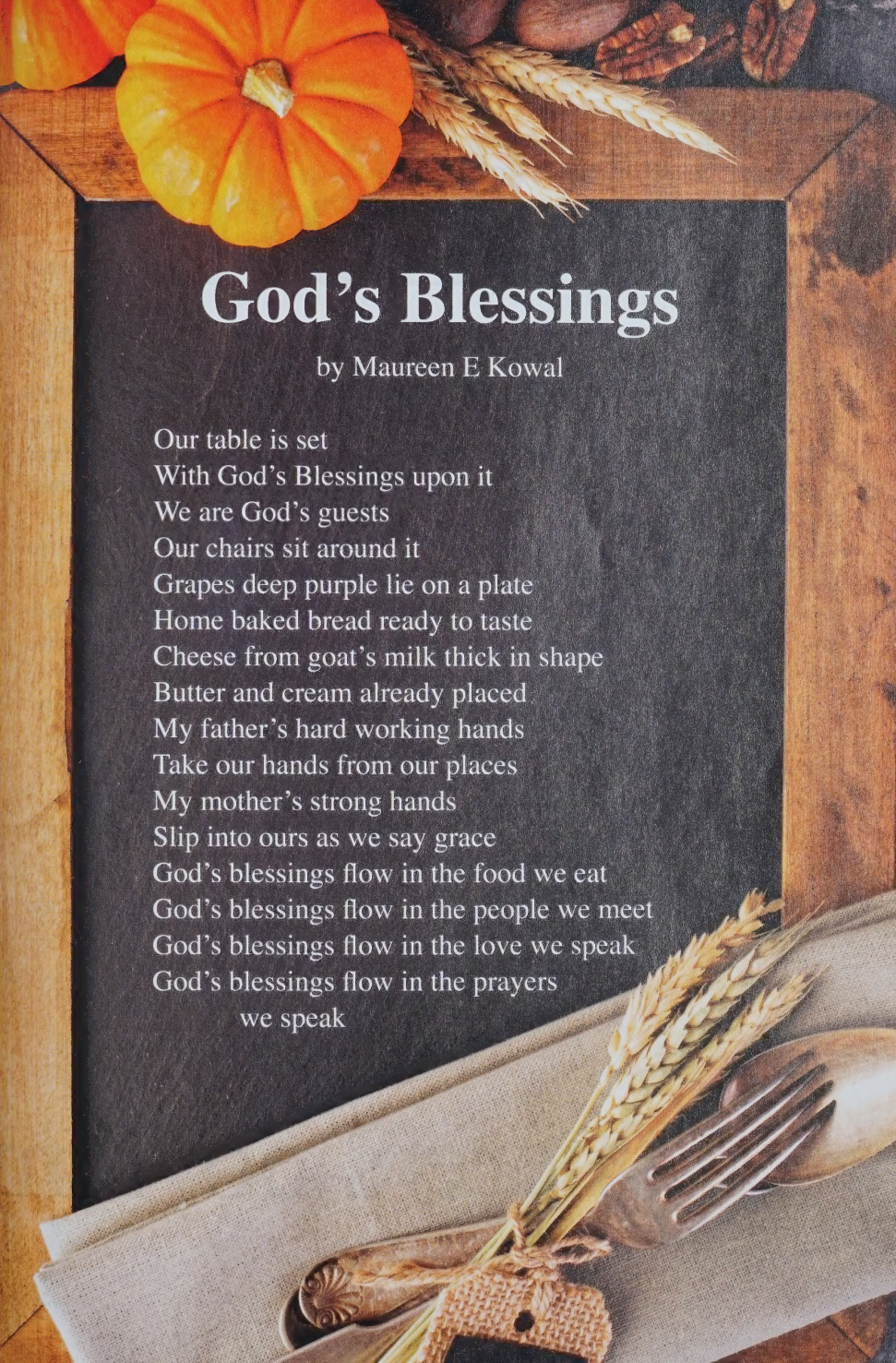
Hymn #644: May the mind

Commissioning:

Go out into the world, bringing God's hope
and peace to all who you meet.

Now may the blessings and peace of Almighty
God, our Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with
us all now and forever more. Amen.





God's Blessings

by Maureen E Kowal

Our table is set
With God's Blessings upon it
We are God's guests
Our chairs sit around it
Grapes deep purple lie on a plate
Home baked bread ready to taste
Cheese from goat's milk thick in shape
Butter and cream already placed
My father's hard working hands
Take our hands from our places
My mother's strong hands
Slip into ours as we say grace
God's blessings flow in the food we eat
God's blessings flow in the people we meet
God's blessings flow in the love we speak
God's blessings flow in the prayers
we speak

Live in the Moment!

by Sharon Dow

I enjoy life—family, friends, our apartment, our balcony, my writing, trips, books, church, and the list goes on. But I do sometimes get caught up in worrying about ‘tomorrow.’

I admit it, I’m guilty. Guilty of waiting for things to come; guilty of rushing things along in my mind; guilty of hoping this or that will soon end. Guilty.

How often have I been in a situation that I want to end? Often small things like a dentist appointment. In the chair I calculate how long I think the procedure will

be, counting the minutes, dividing by two to figure out the mid-point, and then watching the time to the middle. I guess I figure if I can make it to the middle, it’s all downhill from there and I can endure it.

Maybe my husband is away on business for a few days. Once again, I count the hours until I can expect his return. I calculate the mid-point and once again watch for it. Once past the mid-point, it seems to ease my mind.

Perhaps we’re going on a trip that’s out of my comfort zone; or there’s a medical procedure; or a visit;



There's no Tim

or an illness—the situation doesn't matter, I still work my calculations. A seven-hour flight is divided by two into three and one half hours, add that to the current time—half-way there.

But on our extended trip this summer (some of which was definitely out of my comfort zone), I found God prompting me to “live in the moment.” For me it was a radical eye-opening thought. It became like a mantra for me and I said it to myself over and over as we travelled roads too close to the edge of a drop-off, drove along a shore where the water was too close to the road, walked a rough path too close to the edge of a cliff, flew in a very small plane, missed a flight early in the morning due to a mix-up,

arrived at a hotel that couldn't find our reservation (even though we had a copy of the confirmation with us). You get the picture.

The ‘live in the moment mantra’ changed things for me. Each time I said the words in my mind, I relaxed and enjoyed the journey. Life is too short to continue my unbalanced view of things that come my way. I don't want to lose this perspective as I continue on my life's path. I don't want to miss the joy of important things along the way. I want to enjoy sitting on my balcony listening to the birds, watching the clouds drift by, hearing children play, observing my neighbours walking their excited dogs.

It's okay to anticipate future

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:34

like the Present

LIVE FOR TODAY

“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?” Luke 12:25

events; future trips, future family visits, birthdays and anniversaries around the corner, or a new book nearing completion. Looking forward in anticipation is not the same as stewing in the present, hurrying on each worrying thing.

Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matt. 6:34) I take that to mean, live in THIS moment. Tomorrow’s moments will come with their own joys and sorrows. Wait until tomorrow to enjoy what it brings or deal with its sorrows.

He also said, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” (Luke 12:25–26)

If I worry about things in the future, I’ll miss out on the present. The future is uncertain, but I have this moment; to enjoy, to embrace, to live. This is what I want to do.

Is this sustainable for me? I hope so. I’m sure I’ll slip back into old habits, but I hope I’ll catch myself and live where I am. It seems like the best place to be!

Live in the moment

Tomorrow is not promised

Yesterday is gone

Today is where I am

Live it!

Love it!

Sharon Dow is a graduate of the University of New Brunswick with an education degree and has twenty-seven years’ experience teaching Junior High, serving as vice-principal, and finally as principal of a Christian Day School. She is the author of four Christian Historical Novels, Antipas: Martyr, Pergamum: Satan’s Throne, Huldah: Prophetess, and Sapphira: Unveiled. Sharon also enjoys speaking to groups to share her writing and encourage others in their Christian walk.



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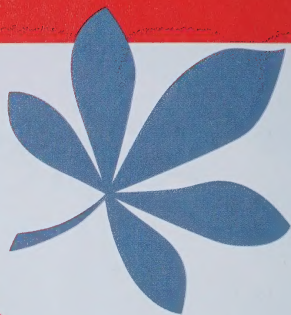
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THE *Invitation*



by Colleen Wood

It's Fall. It's Fall and you are about to attend the September meeting of your WMS group. You are excited to return and share stories with your friends. You are excited to pray, worship, and grow spiritually with this group. You are excited to learn more about the mission of Christ in your community and around the world.

There has been a lot of talk over the years about small groups in the church. Church growth experts talk about their ability to create community, increase participation, and encourage spiritual growth. I think WMS members have known this for a long time.

We haven't generally called our WMS meetings small group ministry, but this is what they are. Even as a child, I remember attending my Mom's WMS meetings with her, and these consisted of a committed group of women, who were learning, serving, and growing together. They supported one another and cared deeply for one another. They were

dedicated to both the WMS and to their own congregation. They were her small group.

It's Fall. It's Fall and you are about to attend the September meeting of your WMS group. This is your small group and you love being a part of it. Yet, there is room in your WMS group for more. There is room for others to join this group. Perhaps, you are saddened by how few attend your WMS group. Perhaps you fear that you will need to close your group. Perhaps, you want others to have this experience that has meant so much to you.

So, what do you do about it? You have tried posting notices on the bulletin board and it's been in the church bulletin. This can work, but truly, personal invitation is the most successful way to invite someone out to a group. Even if you have asked before, try again.

Think about the women in your life. Think about who might most benefit from a night out with

other women. Perhaps, you have a neighbour that doesn't get out much. Consider inviting her and offering to drive her to the meeting. Let her know a little bit about the gathering and what you love about it. Do you have a new Mom in your congregation? Would she benefit from a few hours out with other women? If you have an afternoon meeting, perhaps she would appreciate the time out if she knew that she and the baby were welcome. If you have an evening meeting, it might be the perfect 'excuse' for her partner to care for their child. Are there any women in your church that are recently retired? Strike up a conversation and again, talk about why you love attending the WMS and invite her to try it out. Let others know what happens at a meeting and that it is more than just a business meeting or a learning group.

...from whom the whole
body, joined and knit
together by every ligament
with which it is equipped,
as each part is working
properly, promotes the
body's growth in building
itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:16 NRSV

Statistics prove that a personal invitation is the best way to get new members. Be confident that others will love the WMS as much as you do, if you only take the time to ask.

Finally, if your group is encouraging new women to attend, consider structuring your meetings in a way that will be more welcoming. Instead of starting with the business portion of your meeting, start with worship and your program. Keep business to a minimum—this is good for everyone, not just new members!

We have included an invitation (on the next page) that you can use when inviting others, though really the most important invitation is yours! Copy and distribute in your congregations.





JOIN US *WMS* *Meeting*

Please join us
to learn and grow
together through
prayer, study,
service and fellowship.

Date:

Time:

For more information, contact: _____

Women's Inter-church Council of Canada 100th Anniversary Celebration

by Cathy Reid

As a member of the Women's Inter-church Council of Canada (WICC), I had the privilege to participate in their 100th Anniversary Celebration. Did you know that WICC is the oldest ecumenical organization in Canada? One of the driving forces in the establishment of this organization in 1918 was Bessie McMurchy, a member of the Women's Missionary Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She invited representatives from five women's missionary boards to meet together to "promote the spread of Christ's kingdom by united prayer, united action, and a stronger voice in national questions."

The planning team worked for more than a year on the celebration.

In order to reflect WICC's current Mission Statement—Empowering Christians to pursue justice, peace and reconciliation by standing together in prayer and action—the theme of the day was The Joy of Justice, which was based on Luke 4:18-19. 95 people, including alumnae, current members, and friends gathered to share this special day. One could feel the joy of friendships renewed and fellowship shared in the hall. From the opening prayer to the closing hymn everything flowed beautifully.

Greetings were read from The Canadian Council of Churches as well as from denominations represented on Council. The letter from Janet Brewer, WMS Council President, was much appreciated.



The worship leader, Catherine Bartlett, inspired us with her music and taught us the hymn, In a World Full of Sorrow. This was specially commissioned from Judith Snowdon to reflect WICC's mission statement.

Anointed Joy, the liturgical dance group from St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Whitby ON, presented dance based on our theme and on the chorus of our commissioned hymn. Everyone was given the opportunity to join in the dance choreographed for the chorus of the hymn. To hear this hymn yourself, visit the WICC website page: <https://wicc.org/all-together-now/>.

Catherine McKeil, Executive Director of WICC, spoke on the history of the organization and its future. She also introduced and interviewed three of the grant recipients from the World Day of Prayer 2018 offerings.

Eliane Massaad of Beloved Women (formed in 2010 and based in Milton, ON) spoke about their project entitled, Developing Vocational Training for Women and Syrian Refugees. Their mission is to care for, empower, and support women.



Karen Ward of Cadence Leadership Resource (CLR) spoke about the Burning Stone Program. This is a CLR program which works to connect Indigenous Women and Youth from Northern Ontario remote communities. The project title is Gikendan (to know it or realize it) and will be based in Thunder Bay. The program is to train the trainer for the NLL Indigenous Leader Track.

Finally, Peter Haresnape of the Student Christian Movement spoke about the Student Cahoots Festival which is held each year. This year's camp was held at Cedar Ride Camp, McArthur Mills ON, with the theme Leaning into Discomfort. The weekend featured guest speakers, workshops, facilitated conversation, and of course a dance party.

A surprise awaited the grant recipients at the end of their interviews. Catherine presented them with their grant cheques. Normally the cheques are sent to the grant recipients. It was a joy to meet and share in their delight. One of the other grant recipients was Arise Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

A special cake was shared after lunch and we sang Happy Anniversary to celebrate the occasion. Alumnae members were presented with certificates as a memento of the day.

Rosangela Oliveira of the World Day of Prayer International Organization spoke about the services taking place throughout the world. She reminded us that "World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome you to join in prayer and action for peace and justice on the first day of March." This year's service was from the women of

Suriname and the 2019 service will be prepared by the women of Slovenia.

The keynote speaker for our celebration was Emily Pelly, a PhD student in Halifax NS. Her thesis for her PhD is on Trafficking. Since she was unable to travel to be with us as she is in the midst of a high risk pregnancy, she joined us through the magic of computer technology. She shared her knowledge and expertise with us and her words were informative, challenging, and gave us much to think about.

June 23 was a wonderful day of celebration shared with WICC members, alumnae, and friends. Looking forward to the next 100 years!

Cathy Reid is our WMS Representative to WICC. She attended the 100th Anniversary Celebration on June 23 at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in Toronto.



Mission In Action



Reading and Hand-Writing the
Ngudradrekai Bible

Rev. Dr. Paul McLean
Taiwan

“Sign-up today, pray, and prepare for Sunday, June 3rd! Join everyone here at Alrisapesape Presbyterian Church, as we make our covenant with God and one another to read aloud and write out by hand our own new Ngudradrekai Bible!”

I rejoiced and thanked God when I heard this announcement at church this morning (May 27, 2018). I had a free Sunday between my visits to other Indigenous Bible translation projects. So I decided to worship Twaumase (God) with friends I have made over the past six years at Church of the Rock in Pingtung City located in south Taiwan. While most Ngudradrekai churches are situated in the mountains nearby, the Presbytery planted this church in 1985 for the

convenience of families, who live in the city and can’t always return to their home churches up in the mountain villages. The lively worship service is conducted in a combination of Ngudradrekai (spoken according to the standard Vedai dialect) and Mandarin-Chinese (for the sake of adults who might speak one of

Sign the covenant for your church to join the hand-written Ngudradrekai Bible movement (May 6, 2018)



five other Ngudradrekai dialects, or children and young people who are schooled in Mandarin).

The Scripture lesson this morning was from Luke 9, Jesus feeding the 5000. People in the pews opened their beautiful Ngudradrekai Bibles published in July 2017 to follow along. A teenage girl read the lesson in Mandarin and then a woman elder read it slowly in clear Ngudradrekai for all to hear. Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish, and fed everyone to the full. God has performed another miracle. Through the careful, patient work of diligent Ngudradrekai pastors who first started to translate the Bible in 1988, people can now enjoy feeding on all of God's Word in their own mother-tongue. But how to encourage everyone to open their Bibles, receive this delicious Ngudradrekai food which God has prepared, then eat it daily to grow

strong and serve the Lord?

"Sign-up today, pray, and prepare for Sunday, June 3rd..." In fact, pastors, elders, and representatives from all 19 Ngudradrekai churches joined earlier on May 6 for a special Presbytery service to make their covenants with God and encourage one another to read and write the Bible. Later, congregations like Church of the Rock decided to follow up and hold their own covenant service too. Church members of all ages are accepting the invitation to receive the good food God has prepared, now with its delicious Ngudradrekai flavours, and eat it in a fresh way. How?

Led by their General Secretary, Rev Palri, the Presbytery has prepared bright orange handbags and large (B4) paperback notebooks full of empty lined pages waiting to be filled. Individuals or small groups

Paul with Rev. Palri who drafted the plan for this movement to write out the Bible



A young Ngudradrekai woman writing out the Bible by hand

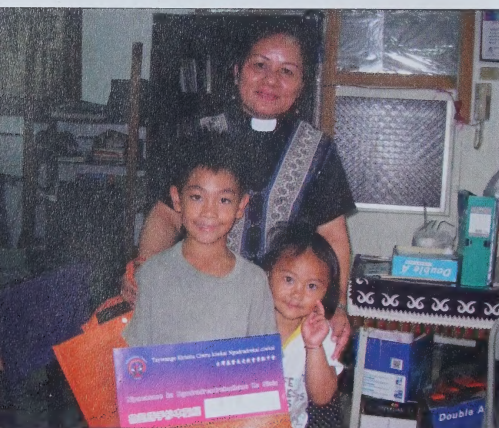


(Sunday school classes, the youth group, women's group, men's group, choir, session) or the congregation as a whole can organize themselves and make their public covenant with God and one another to write out by hand a Gospel, one of Paul's letters, Genesis to Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Jeremiah, the whole New Testament, or for some people the whole Bible. Again, how?

With the printed Ngudradrekai Bible open to the book, chapter and verse you want to write. With an empty notebook alongside waiting to be filled. With pen in hand. After saying a prayer to invite Twaumase (God) to guide you. Slowly reading a verse out loud in clear Ngudradrekai. Then carefully, writing out each word and sentence by hand in the Ngudradrekai script. For example, Luke 9:16-17:

(16) Ku Yesu la malra kwini

The youngest generation of Ngudradrekai Bible readers and writers



Irima ka pange si drusa ku kange, la paswabelenge, si kiaseasene ki Twaumase, ala malra apapipithingi, si patarumara ki lasitu, ku lasitu la apavalavala ki laumawmase. (17) La makitu kane makanaelre, si makitu kabucuku. Ku lasitu la sarubu ku tedrane ku sangukaneane, si pasuete ki 12 ka karadrare. (16) Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, thanked God for them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. (17) They all ate and had enough, and the disciples took up twelve baskets of what was left over.

People are praying and asking God to bless this Bible reading and writing "movement" throughout all the churches. Here is an opportunity

Ngudradrekai pastors who signed up their churches (May 6, 2018)



for grandparents (who may only have a grade three elementary school education—and that in Mandarin, the most recent colonial language in Taiwan) to write out Jesus' words in their own mother-tongue. They can use the alphabet first introduced about 50 years ago when the very first Ngudradrekai Bible stories and hymns were put into writing. (There was no Ngudradrekai writing system or written literature of any kind before then.) Here is an opportunity for children and young people, who are growing up in a Mandarin-speaking and Han-character writing culture, to “honour their parents and grandparents”—one of God's commandments—by learning and

using the language of their ancestors, and to pass it on to future generations.

What a vast library of 66 books-in-one for everyone to savour and enjoy! Gospels, parables, stories, letters, prayers, songs of praise and thanksgiving to Twaumase, laments, laws, prophecies, and sayings of the wise. Full of topics and themes covering every stage and dimension of human life. The truth about “Twaumase—Tama, Lalake si Siri” (God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Wonderful words of life and love. 2300 pages full of words, now printed in Ngudradrekai, to help people grow in faith, hope, and love. Grounded on the solid Rock who is “Yesu Kirisitu.”

The covenant that people are

Individuals signing up to write the Bible by hand



making to God as they participate in this Bible reading and writing movement goes like this:

I promise to obediently, diligently, patiently, and responsibly participate in the Ngudradrekai hand-written Bible movement. I will start on March 25, 2018, the week we remember our Lord Jesus' passion (or as soon as possible thereafter), and aim to finish the books I have chosen to write by July 2019 (or later if needed) when we celebrate our Presbytery's 70th year of mission, and present my hand-written portion of the Bible as a living sacrifice to God.

On May 6, all 19 churches signed up to read aloud and write out by hand their assigned portion of books in the Bible. In this way, the Presbytery as a whole will write out every book in the Bible at least once. Most churches and their members are promising to write out more books than one. Each blank notebook has an introduction which explains how many books you or your congregation can complete if you write out five verses a day or one chapter a day, etc. At the end of 2019 or early 2020, the Presbytery will award prizes to churches and individuals based on how many books they were able to complete.

With God's help, there will be at least five benefits from this movement:

1. Literacy. People of all ages will learn to recognize, read, and write out words and sentences using the Ngudradrekai spelling system.
2. Comprehension. People will learn Ngudradrekai words and how to write whole sentences.
3. Bible knowledge. People will study God's Word and have their lives transformed, based on their own Ngudradrekai language.
4. Bear witness to God's love, as they participate in God's ongoing mission among Ngudradrekai people through this hand-written Bible movement.
5. Bear witness to the Presbytery's unity in Christ, as each church writes out its portion and people participate together to write one special combined hand-written Ngudradrekai Bible (in addition to all the other portions churches and individuals who write for themselves).

May this exciting example from our Ngudradrekai brothers and sisters inspire more of us in the PCC to read daily and even write out portions of our own Bibles. God might perform another miracle in our families, congregations and The Presbyterian Church in Canada too.

SYNODICAL

The Synodical of **Quebec and Eastern Ontario** held its Annual Meeting on April 7 at St. Matthew's church, Ingleside. Their minister, Rev. Feras Chamas, extended a warm welcome to all.

Rev. Liz Chan from St Andrew's church in Kars led worship, and the Rev. Sarah Kim, Executive Director of WMS gave greetings.

President Pat Grainger constituted the meeting and introduced our guest speaker, the Rev. Glynis Williams, Associate Secretary for International Ministries. Her topic was "Why Partnerships? Reflections on Modern Mission." The world is changing and more and more we are working with our partner churches in their ongoing programs. She spoke of some of the work presently in Malawi, Taiwan, Ghana, Nepal, and Hungary.

Rev. Reine Boghus led the In Memoriam Service and thanks was given for the faith and ministry of the members of the WMS who had died during 2017.

After a lovely lunch and a short hymn sing, the afternoon was given over to business. Reports were presented, discussed, and accepted. Reports of the presbyterials were given by the various Presidents, followed by the Synodical President's update on council activities.

The report of the Nominating Committee was presented. The lack of nominees for both President and Vice President prompted a lively discussion on the future of the Synodical. An ad hoc visioning committee has been formed with a mandate to suggest viable options to enable Synodical to continue as it is a much needed link in the area.

Sarah Kim conducted the swearing in of the officers for 2017–2018 and the meeting concluded with thanks to all who had arranged the meeting, those who attended, those who had participated in the program, and a special vote of thanks to Pat Grainger who had served so faithfully over the past two years. She then closed the meeting with prayer.

PRESBYTERIAL

Barrie Presbyterial held their annual meeting May 31 at Vankoughnet Village Square. Our 2018 theme is "By the power at work within us God can accomplish abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine," from Ephesians 3:20. President Janice Terry opened the meeting with prayer. Irene Boyes brought greeting from St. David's church in Vankoughnet.

Then, Dorothy and Peter Ruddell led devotions on Paul's revelation to the secret of God's love. Business followed with the acceptance of

the annual reports. June Campbell, Elaine Steele, and Janice Terry gave a full report of the 2018 Synodical in Kingston and a memorial service was held for those WMS members who passed in 2017.

Following a delicious lunch, Betty Grant introduced our guest speaker, Mary Helen Garvin. Her topic was "Food, Faith and Mission." In Canada, 31 billion dollars' worth of food is wasted each year, yet the United Nations reports, everyday 31,000 die of starvation or nutritionally based diseases. We buy more than we need and suppliers only sell the "perfect" fruit leaving others to be wasted. We need food for nourishment and fueling our bodies and we should celebrate God's goodness as in Psalm 65: 9-13, but also look at food related mission.

Elaine Steele installed the officers. Our Book Table (donated used books) seemed to be a success. Following the meeting, a visit to St. David's Church was available to those interested.

~Jill Pardy

LOCAL

Fairview Presbyterian church, Vancouver closed its WMS group on June 10. Marion and Bill Stroet, WMS members, read scripture. Susan Trapp, our president, introduced the service. Margaret Walker, our treasurer, gave us a colourful picture of Fairview Presbyterian WMS work in mission over the years. Rev. Brad Childs, our minister, led our group in the Affirmation of Continued Mission and closed in prayer. The closing hymn was the 100th Anniversary WMS hymn.

Circulation News

It's renewal time! It is always an exciting time in the office, as we send out our renewal packages and wait for them return. I love seeing your names as they come across my desk.

You will notice a significant rate increase this year. Although we would love to keep Glad Tidings at its current price, we have experienced a number of increases over the last several years and Glad Tidings has not raised its prices to reflect those changes. Over the past several years, we have seen increases in the cost of postage, printing, and staffing costs. So this year, our rates must increase.

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Remembering

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Knox Church,
Tiverton ON

Wendy Berfelz
Bessie McMurchy WMS,
Knox Presbyterian,
Listowel ON

Hendrika (Henny)
Donkersteeg
Ventnor Auxiliary WMS
Riverview Presbyterian
Church, Iroquois ON

Beatrice Firth
Kortright Presbyterian
Church,
Guelph ON

Jean Milne
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women,
Sarnia, ON

Joan McDiarmid
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church, Carleton Place
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Marion Marshall
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The one thing we can all do to keep the cost of Glad Tidings from going up again is to increase our subscription numbers! Talk about the magazine. Share it with others. Give subscriptions as gifts. Thanks for all your work in promoting the magazine and we look forward to continuing to produce this excellent magazine.

Glad Tidings



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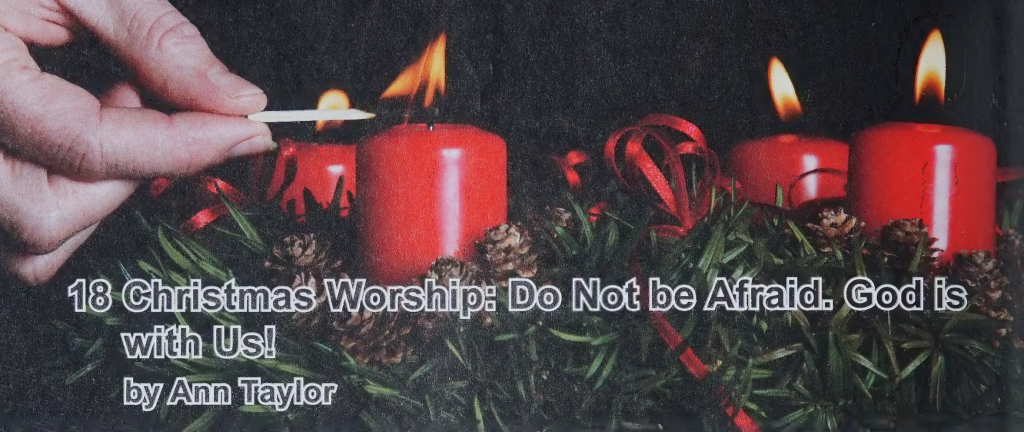
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Glad Tidings

November/December 2018





18 Christmas Worship: Do Not be Afraid. God is with Us!

by Ann Taylor

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Glad Tidings

November/December 2018

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I have heard it said that generosity leads to more generosity. Today, I am living proof of that. I am helping friends raise money to renovate their house. A horrible infection left the husband, a father of two, wheelchair bound, and the resulting cost to make their home safe and accessible is close to \$150,000. Due to all the other expenses that they have endured since they began this journey 18 months ago, they are financially depleted and need help. So, among other things, a group of us started a Go Fund Me page.

For those who don't know what a Go Fund Me page is, it is basically a website where you can tell the story of people who need help and ask for a financial contribution. I have shared this Go Fund Me page through email, Facebook, and word of mouth. This week, many friends of this family have contributed to the cause and I am thankful for each of these, but one stood out to me. One of my friends contributed. Although she knows me, she doesn't know my friends who are in need.

I thanked her personally, and told her how amazing her donation was. She said she saw someone in need and since she could help, she did. It was a humble response to a most generous act. She served as such an example of generosity to me that she had me evaluating my own level of generosity.

Yes, there are scams out there. Yes, there are good practices to follow when thinking about giving. But, I sometimes overthink my 'generosity'. As I head into Advent, I want to be more generous. I want to give a dollar or two at the check out to a cause I might never support and worry less about the tax receipt. I want to support friends of friends who are in need. I want to support causes that matter to others as much as certain causes matter to me. I will put less limits on my generosity and give a little more, even if it doesn't increase the amount on my tax return.

This season, be generous. Your actions just might encourage others to be generous too.

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost.

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), Jesuit founder



The Problem With Superheroes

I have a problem with superheroes. Now and then I feel I could use a visit from one, but I would not want to sink into the habit of sitting around waiting to be rescued. After all, that is what superheroes do best. They swoop in out of nowhere, dispatch the bad guys, and put everything right. So unless you actually *are* the superhero—and I did enjoy making an appearance as Wonder Woman on Halloween back in 1977—there is little to do but sit passively and wait.

Waiting and watching for someone to swoop in and solve your problems has a certain dangerous appeal. Rooted in a sense of helplessness and deep distress, this expectation pervades many of the traditional

scripture readings for Advent. “Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down!” cries the prophet. Save us! Rescue us! Set right all that is wrong in this messed-up world!

I admit I sympathize with the acute longing expressed in these passages. But their passivity makes me uneasy. I often breathe a sigh of relief when, on the second Sunday in Advent, John the Baptist comes striding out of the pages of the New Testament, howling and stinging like a sandstorm, hurling imperatives: *Repent! Change your ways! Bear good fruit! Be content with what you have! Share!*

As intimidating as John can be, I like the fact that his gaze is fixed on *now*. Don’t just look back in wistful

A Different Kind of Hope

by Laura Alary

remembrance, or peer ahead into a future you hope someone else will create, make changes *now*. His idea of Advent waiting and hoping is both active and purposeful. Don't just sit there! Do something!

But there are times when doing something is simply not an option.

A Season of Hope?

A little over three years ago, my mom had a stroke. When I went to see her in the hospital, I brought a card with a small water colour painting of Spring Garden Road in Halifax. I told her I hoped we could stroll along that street and prowl through the familiar shops when she recovered. But she did not recover. Instead, she had more strokes and spiraled into physical and

cognitive decline. Every now and then, terrifyingly aware of what was happening to her, she would ask, "Is there any hope for me?"

Words deserted me. I knew what she meant by hope: "Will I ever be the way I was before?" Because of the damage to her brain, and the degenerative nature of her condition, the answer was *no*. The usual understanding of hope as a good outcome was meaningless. On the contrary, such a notion of hope trapped her between a past she longed for but could not have, and a future which looked very different from what she wanted.

When Advent came, I found myself resisting the prophetic visions I had once found so beautiful and

Advent is a rehearsal. It teaches us to wait without losing heart, which is really how we need to live all the time.

comforting. Those familiar texts, with their visions of an idealized future or a restored past, made me restless and discontented—even a bit angry. All that hope—future-oriented and optimistic—seemed false. *I hope the tests are clear. I hope we can save this relationship. I hope the plane gets there safely. I hope she recovers. I hope everything is OK.* The truth is, sometimes the news is bad. Sometimes nothing turns out well.

Sometimes our hearts break.

A Different Kind of Hope

One day as I was reading, I came across this passage from the prophet Habakkuk:

*Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off*

*from the fold
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.
God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.*

I was struck by it because it seemed to speak of a different kind of hope—a hope that does not depend on a good outcome. The rejoicing in these words has nothing to do with improved circumstances. Hope is not rooted in the promise that one day the figs will blossom the way they did in the good old days. Rather, this hope is connected to *presence*—a profound experience of communion with God, here and now.

Spiritual teachers from many

traditions tell us that when we go rushing ahead into the future, or cling to the past, we become distracted and miss the present moment. And it is in the present—the only time that actually exists for us—that God comes to us.

The more I pondered this different kind of Advent hope—a hope that springs from being aware of the presence of God in the *now*—the more I thought I should put together my own Advent lectionary. It would start with Habakkuk, then move on to Paul, who spoke so passionately about the unwavering presence of Christ in and through all circumstances:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Maybe we all secretly long for a superhero, someone to tear open the heavens and descend from on high to fix everything. But the Christian story does not offer that. Instead, it holds out to us a different vision of God—weak and vulnerable, but fully present, as close as our own flesh and blood and breath. The Christ child—like Jesus on the cross—is a symbol of a different kind of hope, not the hope that says everything will be OK, but the hope that declares there is

nothing that can separate us from the steadfast love of God.

Rehearsal Time

When my mom was dying, a few friends from her church came and gathered around her bed and sang to her. They could do nothing to change the inevitable. They could neither undo nor recreate the past, and they could certainly not open up a new future. But they could be present. They surrounded mom with love and music. And as I see it, that is what it means to make Christ present.

When we can let go of the things we usually cling to—memories of the past, expectations for the future, our fond notions of how things should be—we open ourselves to an encounter with the living God, here and now. And when this happens, Christ comes into the world, again and again.

Advent is a time to practise hopeful waiting—not peering into the future waiting for rescue, but letting go and trusting that we belong to God, and that God is doing something purposeful in and through us right now. Advent is a rehearsal. It teaches us to wait without losing heart, which is really how we need to live all the time. By moving through this holy season slowly and mindfully, we prepare ourselves to meet the Christ child, and to recognize Christ whenever, and however, Christ comes.

He Made a Choice

by Becky Roushorne-Lau

We open the scene at Christmas with a young mother. We aren't entirely sure of how she feels or how she will cope. There is no narration of her thoughts as she journeys towards Bethlehem. We do not know her doubts and fears. We do not know how she felt about being pregnant so young. Maybe she was an old soul, created by God to be the mother she needed to be. Maybe she was young and unburdened by the responsibilities that lay ahead. Either way there would be complications later on. We've read his story. We know the pain she will feel when she loses him.

Whoever Mary was, she was what was needed. She made a choice to listen and obey even when doubts might have played in her mind. She made a choice.

As we move into the story, we meet Joseph. A man who loved a woman. Who had pledged his life to hers. She becomes pregnant. There are questions. Will he? Won't he? What is a man to do? His community will judge him for staying. They may even shun the family. What comes next he doesn't know but he listens to that voice, to the one who tells him to stay. He listens and trusts. He makes a choice and walks forward in faith but is not unaware of what could happen. There are worries and doubts but he

pushes back. He must keep going. He made a choice.

They travel far. They journey together, partners on a path that no one else knows they are on.

There is a birth. It is messy and chaotic. There are no midwives or obstetricians, no drugs, or surgery if anything goes wrong. They are alone, together. They cannot turn back no matter how much either one wants to. This birth will happen, in a stable of all places. The baby arrives and they, like every parent, are fully hit with the realization that this child is dependent upon them.

Mary feeds her child. She awkwardly wraps him in cloths they have dug out of their packs. Her body aches from the work it has just done. Struggling as new mothers do with fatigue and exhilaration, she cannot settle. She needs to sleep but longs to look at her tiny child. Fatigue eventually wins and she sleeps alongside Joseph, vulnerable and scared. Together they lay in that stable. That fortress built for animals becomes their temporary home. The dirt, the wind, the animals and their smells surround them in their first home together.

Things don't get easier. As they raise Jesus, they find themselves vulnerable to outside forces.

Vulnerability is something we all face. In life, we are vulnerable to the whims of others. Choices that are made by people who are not known to us have the power to affect us in ways we cannot even fathom. As people we are dependent upon one another. We are all connected. We are all intertwined. We like to think we're not. We like to think we're independent beings but this isn't entirely true. Each choice we make impacts this earth and the people who live on it. Each choice we make has the potential to bring good or spread evil. Each choice we make does in fact make a difference in one way or another.

I think that is what makes this story so remarkable. God makes a choice. As we chose things everyday, so too did God choose. He chose to cloak himself in vulnerability. God chose to release power and might, and embrace vulnerability so we might know him more fully. God chose to open himself up to harm and pain so that we might see what it means to truly live. God made a choice. God chose us.

May the coming year bring you joy and blessings. May we find ways together to choose peace, to spread light in the world and speak truth to those who need it. Merry Christmas!

Becky Roushorne-Lau is a minister in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She tends to find God in the overlooked moments and is amazed at his constant presence in her every day. She loves the joy her family brings, and embraces people and food, football, and festivities. She reads always, write when inspired, sings well, dances badly, and embraces the silly in the everyday.



Welcoming the Stranger



"[W]e are there simply to appreciate our wonderful neighbours. We notice. We listen to stories. We recognize each individual's gifts. We receive each other."

When there was no room at the inn, a makeshift place became the holiest of holy ground for one little family, far from home. Finding holy ground: that is what we do together every week, through God's grace, at our Boarding Homes Ministry (BHM) visits.

Mary and Joseph, like many before them, were strangers in a strange land when Jesus was born. There's a reason why the principle of welcoming the stranger is such a constant refrain in scripture. (It's the most invoked principle in the five books of Moses). The longing for

connection is our deepest spiritual need. It is one and the same as our longing for God. What the Bible reminds us is that through the practice of community we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to channel God's love for one another. When we do this, we unveil the holy ground on which we stand.

This is the Boarding Homes Ministry model: teams of faithful lay visitors and me, a multi-faith chaplain, visit the residents of local boarding houses. We are guests, allowed to visit by the home owners. Usually, the people who visit boarding homes are either local friends or health professionals such as nurses and social workers checking up on people, giving injections and conducting assessments. BHM teams, by contrast, are there to be an "agenda-free presence": no assessments, no treatment, no fixing. As guests, we are there simply to appreciate our wonderful neighbours. We notice. We listen to stories. We recognize each individual's gifts. We receive each other.

When a person is new to the house they might approach our visits tentatively. Some are new to the country, while others are visiting us



Boarding home in Toronto, ON

from "strange lands" that are not so far: in prison for the last few years, or living in the "strange land" of mental illness, with a different way of seeing the world. Experiences like paranoia and trauma can make it hard for people to approach us. It's not easy to trust a new group of people, especially when the class difference can be obvious. *Who are these volunteers? What's their agenda?* The fear accompanying people can be palpable. The only way to prove the absence of an agenda is to keep showing up. A team's steady, faithful presence allows opportunities for residents to slowly let their guard down. That steadfastness is a spiritual

practice on our part, one that quietly conveys God's steadfast love that accompanies us.

There is, of course, a single, largely unspoken agenda. To experience God's steadfast love, together.

Conscious of the welcome we receive in their home, one way we show that we return the welcome is through food. We might not have an opening or the right words to say to them, "God's love for you is abundant," but we can say it with treats. A few times a year we have

feasts: a barbecue in the summer where residents can have seconds, thirds, and fourths (God's love is abundant!), and, of course, Christmas dinners.

On a regular visit, a new resident's eyes might open wide seeing butter tarts, taking one and slipping away to their room. Sometimes it is months before the trust is built and we begin to hear that person's story. Sometimes those months will give us the gift of that person's sustained presence: no words, but enough comfort with us that they can stay in the room for



Boarding home in Toronto, ON

the whole visit. We want to be with them. They want to be with us. God has chosen us for one another. Grace abounds.

Some teams bring music of one kind or another. One resident said of a team member: "I like that he plays his banjo. I like that I can ask him questions about the Bible. And I like that he is kind and compassionate, not like my dad". As we become not-so-strange to each other, wounds and vulnerability begin to show. These are held with reverence. Some people's stories are shocking, many are heartbreaking. Staying with the person's story can take a lot of focus and equanimity on the part of team members (and often a thoughtful debrief afterward, as well as regular workshops and training). One crucial ingredient in our welcome, therefore, is acceptance. To remain steadfast in caring companionship, to receive vulnerable people with reverence and care, is one of the greatest gifts we can give.

The surprising part for many of our team members early on in building these relationships is how much they themselves receive. Over time, we all learn that we aren't bestowing God's steadfastness and compassion. We're participating in it. And as we participate, we also receive. Coming to a visit with a burden or a question on the heart, we often leave with a feeling of lightness or resolution. Something

truly transformative happens in those spaces. The Spirit is manifestly at work. In our gathering, we uncover the welcome at the heart of things.

When you make welcoming the stranger into your spiritual practice, you'll find it always goes both ways. That longing in each of our hearts for connection can swell to become a great loneliness. "My heart is restless until it rests in You," writes St. Augustine. In the inner city, the stigma and affliction of poverty, mental illness, and addiction can add layers and layers of isolation around people's souls. The miracle that unfolds in our boarding home visits is that when we open our hearts to each other, grace comes pouring in. "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." Loneliness makes space for love. Through welcome, we delight in one another. We are more ourselves, more God's children, when we come together.

Kate McGee is the Executive Director of Boarding Homes Ministry. Kate worked with BHM for 3 years as a student chaplain under Roger Hunter's mentorship. She brings a speciality in the spiritual care of people with lived experiences of mental illness, cultivated through years of work as a multi-faith hospital chaplain in both inpatient and outpatient psychiatric settings. Kate has also offered spiritual care in nursing homes, homeless shelters, and women's shelters.

When you believe you can



by Victoria Stirling

"Hello." Sally Baker greeted me. "I'm back again." She smiled. "But, this time it's only going to be a short stay. As you all know Emily, our daughter, is getting married in a week's time and that's something I'm not planning to miss for anything."

She turned her blonde head and gazed for a moment up at her husband. He nodded. "That's absolutely right."

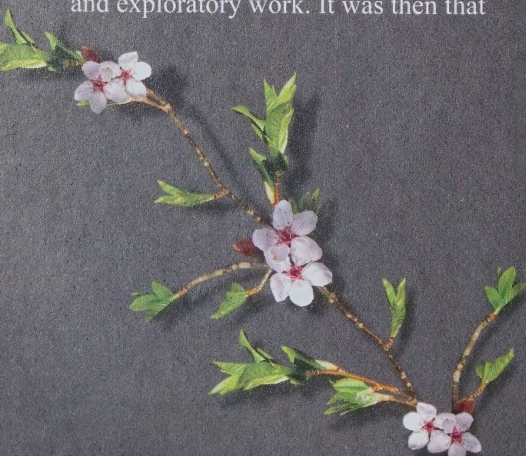
Sally had come to the medical floor several months earlier for tests and exploratory work. It was then that

she had learned of her diagnosis—she had cancer that had spread to several organs and it was inoperable. Both she and her husband were informed, and told that her prognosis wasn't good. Yet, she had been adamant that she would live to see their daughter get married.

"If you just go down to your room," I said, "I'll be along soon to see you."

As they headed down the hall, I felt sorrow for this lady. Sally and Bob had been married for twenty-four years, with Emily, and a son, Gary. They had been planning their daughter's wedding for nearly a year, and all the staff knew how important this event was to them.

Entering her room I found her already in bed. "Well love," Bob leaned over and kissed her. "I'll leave you with your nurse, and I'll be back tomorrow." He waved as he left.



"Oh!" Sally lay back against the pillow. "I feel so tired all the time. More than I've ever felt before, which worries me a bit, because I've just got to be fine for next week." She sighed. "Also, I don't want Bob agonizing about me anymore than he does."

I peered into Sally's pale face, and saw the dark circles around her brown eyes. The desire to reassure her troubled me; I wanted to be able to tell her for sure that she would be with her daughter on her special day. But, because I didn't know if it was the truth, I chose to say nothing.

After getting the admission formalities completed, and her resettled, I left her room. The nurse's station, never a quiet place on admitting days, resembled a beehive of activity. The constant coming and going of staff as they got their patients admitted, kept everyone busy. Nevertheless, several of my peers came over to me and inquired about Sally's condition.

I shrugged. "I really don't know, but maybe her doctor can tell us."

The young intern who had examined Sally was sitting at the desk. "Excuse me," I said. "What's your assessment of Mrs. Baker's condition?"

His expression turned grim, which immediately made me feel uneasy. "How well do you know her?"

"I've known her ever since she first came to this floor. Why?"

"Then you know that her prognosis is poor." He glanced

through her chart. "Also, since her last treatment she has lost a lot of weight, and this doesn't help her over-all situation; she's very weak."

"You do know," I looked directly into his face. "She wants to attend her daughter's wedding, which is in seven days time." I frowned. "She is going to be able to go, isn't she?"

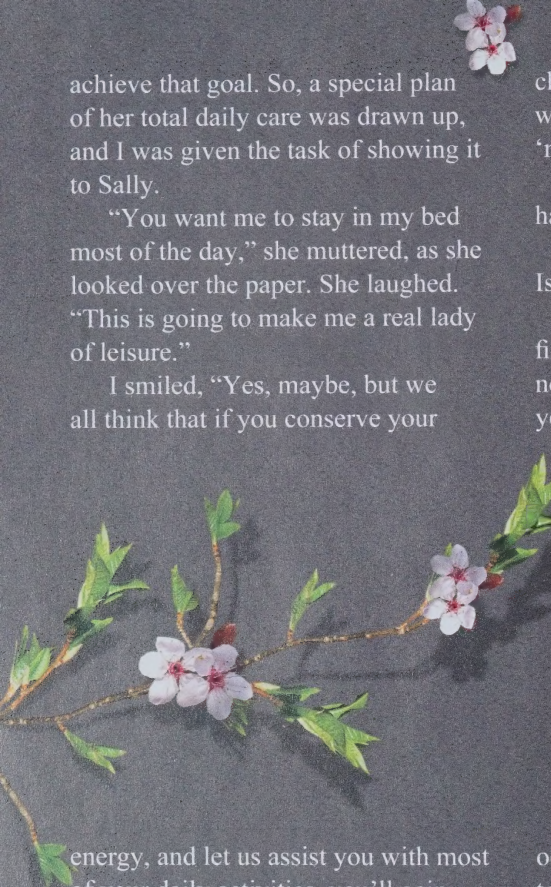
"Yes, yes, Mrs. Baker told me her plans." He stood up. "Let's just say at the moment we're unsure of whether or not that she'll be fit to go anywhere. We'll wait and see how she tolerates this next course of treatments."

Sally started her therapy the following day, and as she always did suffered greatly from nausea and vomiting. While I was trying to help ease some of her discomforts with medication and mouth care, Sally grabbed hold of my hand. "There's no need to look so worried, nurse I'm going to be alright."

She patted my arm. "I really am. My mind is completely made up about that."

She grinned. "So please, lose that solemn face." Her positive outlook made me feel ashamed of the fears I had for her.

That day, the head nurse, Miss Green, chose for discussion at conference time, my patient's case history. Because all the staff knew how much Mrs. Baker wanted to attend her daughter's wedding, it was unanimously agreed we would do everything possible to help her



achieve that goal. So, a special plan of her total daily care was drawn up, and I was given the task of showing it to Sally.

"You want me to stay in my bed most of the day," she muttered, as she looked over the paper. She laughed. "This is going to make me a real lady of leisure."

I smiled, "Yes, maybe, but we all think that if you conserve your

energy, and let us assist you with most of your daily activities, you'll gain back some of your strength."

At first Sally had been emphatic in her protests that she could manage most everything on her own. "I'm an independent sort, you know that by now," she said. "So, I don't know if it's the right thing doing so little for myself?"

"Believe me Sally," I smiled, "it is the best for your general health."

The day before her daughter's wedding, Sally arranged to have a hairdresser come in and fix up her hair. It was sparse from all the

chemotherapy she'd had but she still wanted it to look extra special for the 'morrow.

"When will you be getting your hair done?" I asked as I bathed her.

"She's coming in at one o'clock. Is that a bad time?"

"No! That should work out just fine. I'll see if I can get the special neck support so she can wash your hair while you're lying on a stretcher."

"Oh! My," Sally gave a little laugh. "You are making me very lazy."

"You lazy, never!" I finished bathing her. "We're doing this so you'll have lots of pep for tomorrow."

Finally, the day of the wedding dawned. Everyone on the floor from the staff to the other patients was caught up in the thrill of the occasion. I was pleasantly surprised to see Sally sitting in a wheelchair at the desk when we arrived for the day shift. Her small pallid face had a gentle radiance, and I was happy for her.

"I've got everything ready," she said. "All I need now is someone to help me get washed and dressed."

"Is that so?" I said. "Well, as soon as we our get report done we'll be right in me-lady." Several co-workers and I gave her a little bow, which made her giggle.

"Thank-you, thank-you, all of you." Her voice wavered and shook.

"I know now that I couldn't have done this on my own."

"Okay!" I scolded. "You save that for the wedding." I turned her chair around. "Let's put you back in your room until I'm able to come and help you."

We had other patients to provide with their daily care, but that morning everything went smoothly and we soon had our work done. The entire ward was waiting to see Sally emerge from her room in all her finery. Her lilac silk dress was a perfect fit as were the matching shoes; on her head she wore a circle of flowers. As I wheeled her into the hall the loud salutations that she got from everyone caused her to cry.

Bob leaned over and kissed her cheek. He dried her tears with a Kleenex. "Now, now, let's not be having any of that already," he winked. "She's likely going to weep a bucket of tears at the wedding." Everyone waved as they left the ward.

It was an anti-climax for the rest of the shift. The day flew past. It was almost time for Sally to return to the

floor. Bob wheeled her in followed by the wedding party, which brought the other patients out of their rooms. We all admired the gowns, and everyone congratulated the happy couple. I remember that there were lots of smiles exchanged as well as some tears from both the bridal couple and the bride's parents.

As I was getting her ready for bed that night Sally said, "Nurse, this has been the most wonderful day of my life." She peered into my face, "You see I accomplished much more than any of my doctors thought I would."

"You certainly did." I smiled as I tucked the blankets around her.

"You've all been so kind." She said, before closing her eyes. A few days later Sally died.

I learned something from this extraordinary woman. That if you put your whole mind on accomplishing something, anything is possible. This positive attitude, along with the belief that you can, will overcome the worst obstacle. It's something I try hard to apply in my own life.



Christmas Worship

Do Not be Afraid. God is With Us!

by Ann Taylor



Opening:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Call to Worship:

ONE: As your people meet

ALL: to offer praise and prayer

ONE: in changing times of expectation and challenges.

ALL: God is here!

Hymn #110: Come, Thou long-expected Jesus

Prayer of Adoration and Confession (unison):

Faithful God,

Open our eyes, ears, and hearts, during this great celebration as Christ’s light pierces the darkness of our lives. Help us to receive your good news and focus on sharing that love.

Christ has come. Christ will come again. Your promises stand unshaken through all generations. You renew us with hope that we may stay awake, alert, and alive with your Spirit watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Forgive us our Father, for times of worry and anxiety; for not trusting in you; for letting the world run our agendas and actions; or for missing the sacredness of this time and the favour of your grace.

Renew us in faith, hope, and love that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and deeds and to claim our love as Lord of lords and King of kings.

To whom be glory always, Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us in all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:7)

Scripture Readings:

Luke 1: 5–7, 11–14 Luke 1: 26–32 Luke 2: 8–20

Hymn # 138: While shepherds watched

Reflection: Don't be afraid. God is with us.

A new church year has come. It is time again for the glorious themes of Advent and Christmas— light in the darkness, preparing the way, hope for our lives, peace for the world, deep joy, and eternal love.

Such an amazing, wondrous season to grow in grace. The riches are immeasurable for us. But God coming into our daily lives is often accompanied with fear and trepidation. How can that be, we ask? God's faithful people have always experienced fear in their lives just as we do. From Genesis to Revelation, we hear their stories and hear of God's encouragement.

Luke writes about the fear that the early believers experienced and gave encouragement to face their fears. When we read about Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, and the Bethlehem shepherds, we read of surprising, but not so surprising, responses when God breaks into their situations with the good news.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful believers. Zechariah, a priest in the synagogue, and Elizabeth, his barren wife, had bore the pain and disgrace

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

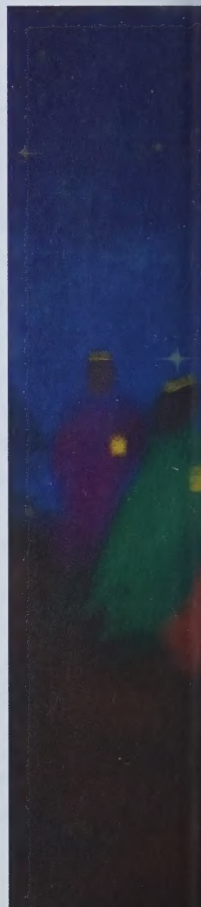
Luke 2:13-14 (NIV)

of childlessness in their culture. Praying constantly for the gift of life, they waited. And then, a breakthrough! The angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah! And how did he respond? He was startled and gripped with fear. Fear of the intrusion, the unknown, the light? And how did the angel respond? Not with shaming or reprimanding, but with great encouragement and good news. Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayers have been heard. Then the promise is given. You will have a son. He will prepare the way of the Lord. The next response is one of unbelief. How can this be? Elizabeth is barren. Both are old. But there is fulfillment! John is born; an amazing time of joy.

Another breakthrough of God occurs through the lives of young people engaged to be married—Mary and Joseph. This promise is even more astounding and unsettling. She is not married and this would bring disgrace and shame. She will conceive a son and name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. Again there is great fear and also great encouragement.

This is another time of unbelief. How will this be? It seems impossible. But she is encouraged and is told that nothing is impossible with God. Overwhelmed, Mary accepts what is promised as the Lord's servant. The birth of Jesus, God's Son, happened in those trying times and places. His Glory was revealed and there was rejoicing.

God breaks through, again—this time to lowly shepherds hard at work in the fields. They are terrified yet they listen to the message of encouragement. They are not to be afraid but to go to see this new child who is Savior of the world. Many questions are asked but they travel to Bethlehem to behold God's promised Messiah. Overcome with joy, they go out telling what they have seen. All who heard it were



amazed at what the shepherds had told them.

God's break-throughs came with announcements, encouragement, promises, and fulfillment at the coming of Jesus Christ. They often were met with expressions of fear and unbelief, but those being called listened with expectation. In time they responded with great joy and delight.

As we enter this time of preparation and fulfillment, celebrating Christ's coming, how will we receive the announcements? What encouragement will we receive? How will we hear the promises? What will be our responses?

God breaks through into our everyday life with new callings and opportunities to love and serve him and our neighbors. What a great time Advent is to listen to God's voice. What an amazing time to rejoice at Christmas for the coming of God's Son, encouraged that God is with us. We do not need to be afraid. Expect fulfillment. Respond with Joy!



"Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born."

John W. Work,
Go, tell it on the mountain



Offertory Prayer:

Gracious God, your abundance is overwhelming. We give thanks for your unending love, guidance, and generosity. May these tokens of our life become means to share your Good News and meet the needs of your world at this time of great joy celebrating the birth of your Son. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Our Father, you break through the walls of our lives with your unending love.

Just as you broke through the pain of Zechariah and Elizabeth with the joy of a son, break through the pain of loneliness and stress that bind some during these lovely days of Christmas.

Create in us the openness of Mary and Joseph to accept your will for an unknown future.

Inspire us with the enthusiasm of the shepherds to share what we have seen. May the joy of our giving increase as our confidence in your presence and provision increases.

Let us sing these days as the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men and women with whom he is well pleased." May we continue to pray together the Lord's prayer....

Hymn #133: Go, tell it on the mountain.

Benediction:

Depart in the name of Jesus. Prepare for his coming into our hearts at this sacred time. Share the joy and love that comes from his breaking into our fears. Listen for the Good News. Respond to God's calling. Rejoice. Amen.

His Name Shall be Called...

by L. Marie

Of a marvellous mystery yet to come
Spoke the prophet Isaiah of old,
That a virgin would bear a royal Son
Was the message that he foretold

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR would be His name
For the King of all Kings He will be;
Sinless, gracious, and always the same,
Friend and teacher for you and for me.

MIGHTY GOD is another great name.
He helped His Father, God, in creation,
Wrought miracles, and some day will reign
In justice over each nation.

EVERLASTING FATHER is also His name
For He lives on eternally.
Is was for us to earth He came,
Loves and cares for us tenderly.

PRINCE OF PEACE, what a beautiful name!
He made peace between God and man.
Some day there'll be no more trouble or pain,
He'll rule in peace, according to plan.

IMMANUEL, what a comforting name!
"God is with us" He came to fulfil
As God incarnate in a human frame,
And by His Spirit is with us still.

~reprinted with permission from:
Meditations by Peter B. and
his daughter L. Marie



INDIGENOUS IN CANADA

by Peter Bu



Participants and friends of the 2017 Healing and R

**The Confession of the
Presbyterian Church in Canada
as adopted by the General
Assembly, June 9th, 1994 will
be given through this resource.**

Let us confess:

The Holy Spirit, speaking in and through Scripture, calls The Presbyterian Church in Canada to confession. This confession is our response to the word of God. We understand our mission and ministry in new ways in part because of the testimony of Aboriginal peoples.

continued on page 27

Opening Prayer:

O God, by your Holy Spirit, guide our conversation, that we might move past the uncertainty, fear, and resistance we have to talking about the church and Indigenous Peoples. May we listen to each other well, but more importantly may we listen well to you.

Give us open ears and soft hearts that we might be willing to reflect again and anew on the history of the church's mission activity with the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



A Brief History of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island:

The relationship between the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island and The Presbyterian Church in Canada is long-standing—dating back almost 250 years. The contexts in which the relationship was forged have changed over time, yet a single question has demanded answers: What gospel was The Presbyterian Church in Canada proclaiming?

The church has a story to tell, the good news of Jesus Christ and the reconciliation and transformation offered to all who declare, “Jesus is Lord.” As the church carries that message to people of other cultures, the question arises, how much of the church’s message is the gospel and how much of the message is cultural baggage? These questions, complicated enough when missionaries travel to another country, are much more complicated when the people of the other culture are the first inhabitants of the land on which Christians are settling, establishing farms, towns, and schools.

The following highlights the challenges faced by Presbyterians sharing the gospel with the First Nations Peoples of Turtle Island.

- Is teaching First Nations People to read and write English part of sharing the good news (assisting in reading and understanding the Bible in English and facilitating worship) or is it part of culture (assimilating the Indigenous People into the English-speaking culture)?
- When does evangelization (so people meet Jesus and become part of the church of Jesus Christ) slip into trying to make Indigenous People into persons with European-Canadian values and way of life?
- Since gospel and culture are so interconnected, should the church simply choose to not follow the instructions of Jesus, “Go and tell,” and not tell Indigenous People in Canada about the good news of Jesus?

UPCOMING
STUDIES will
look at our WMS/
PCC work in
Canada and
Taiwan with
Indigenous
Peoples.

Early Contact

James MacGregor arrived in Pictou County, Nova Scotia to minister to Scottish immigrants in 1786, and quickly came in contact with the Mi'kmaq. He developed a friendly relationship with Chief John Lulan and learned the ways of the woods from the Mi'kmaq this was critical to his survival as he travelled his pastoral charge. MacGregor quietly challenged the paternalistic ways with which many government officials and merchants treated the Mi'kmaq. MacGregor's friendship with the Mi'kmaq and advocacy on their behalf served as examples to

other Presbyterians. Since most of the Mi'kmaq in the region were Roman Catholic, MacGregor was hesitant to launch an evangelistic endeavour among them.

Presbyterians—being late to the Canadian mission field is one of the reasons little work was done by Presbyterians with Indigenous People in eastern Canada. The more hierarchical structures of the Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists allowed those denominations to respond more quickly to their mission call to serve the Indigenous community. The relationship between Presbyterians and Indigenous People between the 1780s and 1850s was rooted in congregational ministry and outreach, as congregation members made connections with these Indigenous People in and around their community.

Settlers Move West

The arrival of Presbyterian clergy in western Canada in the 1850s and 1860s changed the story. John Black arrived in Kildonan (Manitoba) in 1851 to consolidate the fledgling Red River Settlement congregation, and before the end of his third year had married Henrietta Ross (a Metis woman). Scottish Presbyterians, prominent among the traders and post managers of the Hudson Bay Company, and later the North-west Company, married Indigenous women and their children were raised on the “catechism and oatmeal.” With these traders and their children, early Presbyterian congregations in the west had significant numbers of Metis on the membership rolls.

John Nisbet joined Black in 1862 to minister in the Red River Settlement. Shortly after arriving Nisbet felt called to go further west to minister among the Indigenous People near present-day Prince Albert, SK, where a mission was built which became a base for work with Chief Mistawasis on the Mistawasis



One of the earliest images of our Residential School history in the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, G-1741-FC-1

reserve. Frequently, the Nisbet story is told without acknowledgment of the important role played by George Flett and John McKay. Flett and McKay, both Metis, served as translators and associates with Nisbet. McKay was noted for his ability on a horse and his hunting, which gave him the opportunity to bridge the gap between Settler and Indigenous cultures. Flett eventually left the Prince Albert mission and moved to Okanase in western Manitoba as a solo missionary, a ministry that later grew to cover five reserves. Flett was ordained a minister in 1875.

Tensions between the Dakota (Sioux) and the American government began in the 1860s and culminated in Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. During these troubled times, the Dakota people travelled north to Canada to safety. In Canada, they were treated as refugees, for while they

Our Confession continued from page 24

1. We, the 120th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God, and aware of our own sin and shortcomings, are called to speak to the Church we love. We do this, out of new understandings of our past not out of any sense of being superior to those who have gone before us, nor out of any sense that we would have done things differently in the same context. It is with humility and in great sorrow that we come before God and our Aboriginal brothers and sisters with our confession.

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were Indigenous People they were not the original inhabitants of the land on which they were living. The Presbyterian Church in the United States had a long history of building connections with the Dakota people and operated a training school in the Dakota language. As increasing numbers of Dakota people arrived, the Presbytery of Manitoba requested that the Rev. Solomon Tunkasuiciye, an ordained Dakota Presbyterian minister, be seconded to the PCC and serve the Birdtail (Dakota) Reserve in western Manitoba. Through Tunkasuiciye, three young men became involved in the ministry. Peter Hunter, Jason Ben, and John Thunder, who upon completing training, expanded the Presbyterian ministry among the Dakota people at Pipestone, Oak Lake (Canupawakpa Dakota First Nation), and Dakota Tipi reserves. In 1902, an elder from the church on the Birdtail Reserve, Chanske Hanska, wrote to the Foreign Missions Committee asking that a Dakota speaking pastor be sent to Birdtail, "We knew it from the beginning that having the gospel spoken with native tongues was the work of the Holy Spirit." Sadly, no Dakota speaker was available to be sent.

The 1885 Northwest Rebellion stands as a watershed moment in the relationship between settlers and Indigenous People. Two patterns of land use clashed on the parklands of central Saskatchewan as railroad surveyors staked quarter-sections through farmed land divided in strips along the river system. The competing land claims led to threats and violence which drew a response of lethal force. Presbyterians stood on both sides of the debate. Some, including prominent clergy, enlisted in the military units to fight Riel and his allies, others sponsored a General Assembly-adopted recommendation and place the blame for the violence squarely on the Government of Canada. Presbyterians were among both the prosecution and defence teams at Riel's trial. The 1885 Rebellion revealed Canada's willingness to use force against Indigenous People who resisted the will of the settlers.

The Schools

Education frequently has a prominent place in the mission efforts of Presbyterians, including Canadian Presbyterian mission work on the prairies. In



Bird

A nun
Church
listen
Metis
Saska
befor



ek
people from The Presbyterian
ada spent time in June 2017,
e stories of First Nations and
n Winnipeg, Kenora, and
ctured is the group saying grace
a meal at Birdtail Creek, MB.

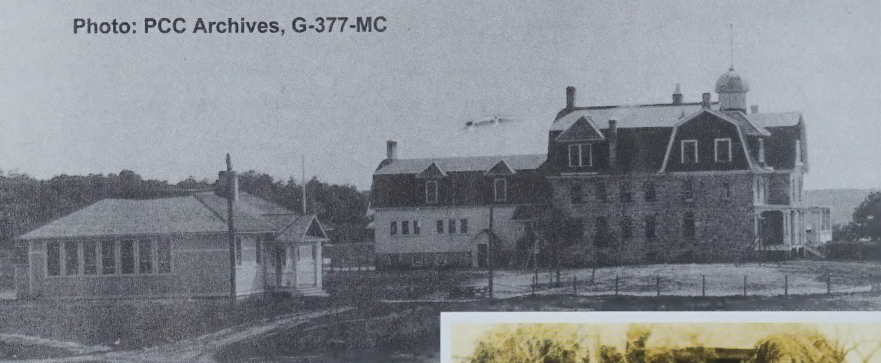
Our Confession continued from page 27

2. We acknowledge that the stated policy of the Government of Canada was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture, and that The Presbyterian Church in Canada co-operated in this policy. We acknowledge that the roots of the harm we have done are found in the attitudes and values of western European colonialism, and the assumption that what was not yet moulded in our image was to be discovered and exploited. As part of that policy we, with other churches, encouraged the government to ban some important spiritual practices through which Aboriginal peoples experienced the presence of the creator God. For the Church's complicity in this policy we ask forgiveness.

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the 1880s, day schools were started by missionaries like the Rev. Hugh McKay. The day schools evolved over time into places where on stormy days students stayed overnight rather than going home through the dangers of a prairie blizzard. Then it became convenient for students to stay at the school during the week and go home for the weekends. When the government got involved in funding these schools, residential schools were born. This pattern was lived out at Round Lake, SK; Crowstand, SK; and Portage-la-Prairie, MB. Later, the church and government would plan and build purpose-built residential schools.

As residential schools arose, day schools remained important to the education system. The legendary Lucy Baker taught at the one-room school at Makoce Waste (near Prince Albert), SK, from 1894 to 1904. No complete list of day schools connected with the PCC seems to exist, which is not surprising as day schools were often short-lived. Day school teachers were appointed by a range of bodies including local school boards and church groups, further complicating the ability to determine which schools had Presbyterian connections.



Top: Birtle Residential School, old school, c.1920s

Bottom: Cecilia Jeffrey School, old school, c. 1931



Photo: PCC Archives, G-6-SB-1

Between 1884 and 1969, the PCC was involved in operating nine different Indian Residential schools. Two closed before 1925: the Regina Indian Industrial School, SK, and the short-lived Crowstand Indian Residential School, SK. Five of the schools became part of the United Church of Canada in 1925: Portage-la-Prairie Indian Residential School, MB; File Hills Indian Residential School, SK; Round Lake Indian Residential School, SK; Alberni Indian Residential School, BC; and Ahoushat Indian Residential School, BC. This article pays little attention to the BC schools. Historical research on the BC schools, pre-1925, would deepen our understanding of the Residential School experience within the PCC. Two schools remained the responsibility of the PCC until 1969 when the Government of Canada took complete responsibility for all residential schools in Canada.

The schools were doomed from the beginning as former staff argued that the government was not prepared to contribute funds sufficient to make these schools effective educational institutions, and the church was not prepared to commit the energy to make them effective spiritual institutions. The schools were operated by the church, but largely funded by the government. Within the Presbyterian Church, the WMS was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the schools. While the Government of Canada paid for the construction and maintenance of the school buildings and provided a per diem for each child enrolled in these school, those funds were insufficient to provide adequate

housing, food, or education to the students. The church was forced to find ways to make up the difference. The schools operated large gardens, in some cases farms, with the produce not only supplementing what students ate, but also being sold to fund school expenses. As students reached higher grades, they spent less and less time in the classroom and more and more time supporting the functioning of the institution of the school. Older students could be found in the gardens and barns, in the kitchen and washhouse, working as unpaid labour for an institution that was theoretically dedicated to their education. Not surprisingly then that students in upper grades often took two years to complete a grade level since over half their “education” experience was spent working for the school.

Disease and death were common in the schools where over-crowding was endemic. Dr. Peter Bryce, Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Immigration and a public health expert, wrote a stinging report in 1907 indicating that between 14% and 24% of students in Residential Schools had died in the previous three years. Bryce, a Presbyterian, was forced to take early retirement to silence him.

Some examples of the living conditions: Katé Gillespie at File Hills, SK, (1907) had no choice but to put the oldest boy’s dormitory outside in a tent. She wrote to her superiors suggesting it was unacceptable to have students sleeping in a tent during a prairie winter. While Presbyterian schools missed the worst of the food experiments conducted on students in the 1960s, the leadership of the Presbyterian Church and the Cecilia Jeffrey School were complicit in the enriched flour project which experimented on children.

Abuse, both physical and sexual, occurred in Presbyterian schools. The principal of the Crowstand School (SK) used disciplinary practices considered extreme even in his time. When he brought students who had escaped from the school back to the school, he would ride in a wagon with these students tied to ropes behind and they were forced to run at the speed of

Our Confession continued from page 29

3. We recognize that there were many members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who, in good faith, gave unstintingly of themselves in love and compassion for their Aboriginal brothers and sisters. We acknowledge their devotion and commend them for their work. We recognize that there were some who, with prophetic insight, were aware of the damage that was being done and protested, but their efforts were thwarted. We acknowledge their insight. For the times we did not support them adequately nor hear their cries for justice, we ask forgiveness.

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4. We confess that The Presbyterian Church in Canada presumed to know better than Aboriginal peoples what was needed for life. The Church said of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, "If they could be like us, if they could think like us, talk like us, worship like us, sing like us, and work like us, they would know God and therefore would have life abundant." In our cultural arrogance we have been blind to the ways in which our own understanding of the Gospel has been culturally conditioned, and because of our insensitivity to Aboriginal cultures, we have demanded more of the Aboriginal people than the Gospel requires, and have thus misrepresented Jesus Christ who loves all peoples with compassionate, suffering love that all may come to God through him. For the Church's presumption we ask forgiveness.

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the wagon or be dragged along. A teacher at Cecilia Jeffrey School in the 1930s near Kenora, ON, wrote to the WMS staff in Toronto complaining about the excessive discipline meted out to students. She reported that the principal had thrown a child through a wall in the school.

In the 1950s, the Ontario Provincial Police

investigated reports of sexual abuse at Cecilia Jeffrey. They discovered that older male students regularly visited female classmates after lights out at night. They further discovered that a female teacher, in an effort to cover up an affair she was having with a male staff member, had seduced a number of older male students, providing them with their first sexual experiences.

Bishop Reynald Rouleau, Roman Catholic Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay, spoke for all churches when he noted the sin at the heart of the Residential School system was the prideful belief that the church and Canadian society could be better parents than Indigenous parents would be to their own children.

A Shift in Mission Thinking

Between 1910 and 1913, a major shift in thinking took place at the PCC. A gathering of Presbyterians working among Indigenous People was held in 1908; the group made up of both Indigenous People and settlers agreed that all settlers coming as missionaries to serve among Indigenous People should learn their language. Further, aspects of the Indigenous culture were consistent with the gospel and those elements should be celebrated. Finally, the Government of Canada should protect Indigenous People from those settlers whose actions

harm and cheated these people. Indigenous culture was important and should be protected and nurtured. The work that the church was engaged in was cross-cultural and it should make use of the tools and approaches of cross-cultural ministry.

Gifted and energetic, the Rev. W. W. McLaren arrived in 1905 to become the principal of Birtle Indian Residential School. A student at the school, Suzette Blackbird, caught his attention and he arranged for her to attend Ewart College for a year (1910–1911). Shortly after her return to Manitoba, Blackbird and McLaren were married. The newly married couple asked to have an apartment in



The TRC Bentwood Box reflects the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendants, and honours those survivors who are no longer living.

The Confession

Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of the road leading to the Confession of the 1994 Assembly. In 1990, the release of the movie, “Where the Spirit Lives” and Manitoba Grand Chief Phil Fontaine’s interview with Barbara Frum put the Indian Residential Schools on the public agenda. Presbyterians were present at a special gathering of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops held in Regina in 1991. Leadership within the Presbyterian Church was convinced this was a Catholic problem until the Rev. Ian Morrison spent a couple of days in the Presbyterian Archives. That led to a trio of listeners—Morrison, the Rev. Richard Sand, and June Stevenson,

editor of *Glad Tidings*—travelling to Birtle and surrounding reserves and also Kenora to listen.

From their listening came the first draft of the Confession which went to the 1992 Assembly.

At that Assembly, it was clear most Presbyterians did not know that the church had operated Indian Residential Schools, let alone where the schools were located. The Confession was sent back for more work to be brought forward again in 1994 and adopted by the General Assembly. In October of that year, the Rev. George Vais, Moderator of the 120th General Assembly, presented the Confession to Grand Chief Phil Fontaine.



Kenora Fellowship Centre (Anamiewigummig) and Flora House.

the school building, rather than living in the principal's house, in order to be closer to the students. The leadership of the WMS was adamant in its opposition, fearing Blackbird would side with the students against the staff and would use her influence over McLaren to make things difficult for staff seeking to teach settler ways. McLaren was removed as principal, and died of appendicitis in 1915. Blackbird, with the couple's two children, returned to the Riding Mountain Band where she had been raised, and her children attended the residential school.

Through the first years of the 1910s, denominational leaders in the burgeoning denominational bureaucracy in Toronto came to regard all work among Indigenous People in Canada as Home Mission rather than Foreign (cross-cultural) Mission. By 1913, when the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and the Women's Home Missionary Society merged to create the Women's Missionary Society (WD), there was no longer a vision to support and celebrate Indigenous culture. To be Christian was to be a settler Canadian; this truth applied as much to Ukrainians arriving in Canada as it did to the Indigenous People of Turtle Island. The church was an agent of Canadian social religion, rather than a proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Rise of Inner City Mission

During the 1960s, denominational leaders recognized that the Government of Canada was less and less interested in funding residential schools, and the time was fast approaching when these schools would be no more. Unwilling to lose contact with the Indigenous Peoples, the PCC imagined new ways to

carry on ministry. The primary idea arrived at was the institutional mission or inner city mission. In the late 1960s, missions were started in Kenora (Kenora Fellowship Center) and Winnipeg (Anishinabe House and Flora House). These missions were followed by projects in Vancouver (Hummingbird Center) and Edmonton (Edmonton Inner City Mission).

By the 1980s, it was increasingly difficult to staff ministries on the reserves, and the end of the Ordained Missionary system (which had provided some staff to the reserves) made staffing reserves almost impossible. Presbyteries responsible for maintaining connections with these missions on reserves found the task impossible, and began to close these missions indicating to the Chief and Council of the bands that the PCC was no longer going to do ministry on the reserves. Available denominational energy and resources were put into the inner city missions and the reserves were largely abandoned. Mistawasis in Saskatchewan is the notable exception to this pattern. (The Nazko ministry (Cariboo) in BC is a newer ministry and is not part of the long-standing Presbyterian work on reserves.)

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5. We confess that, with the encouragement and assistance of the Government of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to take the children of Aboriginal peoples from their own homes and place them in residential schools. In these schools, children were deprived of their traditional ways, which were replaced with Euro-Canadian customs that were helpful in the process of assimilation. To carry out this process, The Presbyterian Church in Canada used disciplinary practices which were foreign to Aboriginal peoples, and open to exploitation in physical and psychological punishment beyond any Christian maxim of care and discipline. In a setting of obedience and acquiescence there was opportunity for sexual abuse, and some were so abused. The effect of all this, for Aboriginal peoples, was the loss of cultural identity and the loss of a secure sense of self. For the Church's insensitivity we ask forgiveness.
6. We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For our Church we ask forgiveness of God. It is our prayer that God, who is merciful, will guide us in compassionate ways towards helping them to heal.
7. We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. What we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people.

Is a New Chapter Opening?

While settlers in the Presbyterian Church continue to struggle with their legacy in the Residential Schools, some Korean members in the church have got about the business of crossing the cultural lines to walk with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. From large urban congregations sending mission teams to remote reserves, to Korean congregations raising funds to support long-term mission work among Indigenous People either on reserves or in urban contexts, to Korean-born clergy leading settler congregations into engagement with their Indigenous neighbours, the story is repeated again and again.

Korean Presbyterians have a deep desire to connect with the Indigenous People of Turtle Island. Koreans based in Neepawa, MB, made connections which nurtured the new life at the Birdtail Reserve; just as it was Koreans based in Brandon who have made connections with Canupawakpa Dakota First Nation (Oak Lake Reserve). The question has yet to be answered: Will the Korean church be more able to set aside culture as they live out the gospel than was the Euro-Canadian church? If they are able to do that, maybe they can be the model for the Euro-Canadian church on how to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ free from culture.

General Questions

- What did you learn from this article?
- What surprised you?
- What feelings/emotions did you have while reading the article?

Other Resources

Presbyterian Church in Canada resource on Healing and Reconciliation can be downloaded from: www.presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-hr



Scripture

Read Psalm 15

- Note the words of verse 4b: “who stand by their oath/promise even to their hurt”?
- The Psalm invites us to keep our word/promises. In what ways have Canadians kept or not kept the promises we made in the treaties and to the parents and children of the Residential School system?

Read 1 Corinthians 2: 1–5

- Paul sought to preach only Christ and Christ crucified when he took the good news to the Corinthians.
- What was Paul’s attitude when he preached the gospel? (A question to ponder: Does speaking with humility mean that we don’t believe? Does speaking with humility mean we doubt the truth of what we are saying?)
- What attitude did the Presbyterian Church portray when it preached the gospel to the Indigenous People?
- What did Presbyterians add to that gospel when they brought the gospel to the students in residential schools?



Monument in the memory of the children who attending the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School.

Read Colossians 3: 9–11

- Paul’s point starts back in Colossians 1:15 where he talks about the role of Christ in reconciling all things. By the time he gets to these verses in chapter 3, he is trying to be practical. He says to get rid of the old cultural practices and put on new practices that come from God the Creator; cultural practices that recognize Jesus Christ is at the center.
- What cultural practices does your congregation have that make people from other cultures feel like outsiders? What might be done to remove those cultural barriers?

Connections and Community

by Debbie Plant

Today's teens—are they wanting community and looking for that connection through social media? In today's world, they are more connected but feeling very disconnected from their peers unless they have that smart device in their hands. On social media, they can put forth any persona that they feel will please the masses and keep what may be troubling them inside—deep inside.

This is what I am seeing on a daily basis. I was looking for a way to connect and support the youth in our area. I have been a youth coordinator at a local church for almost 13 years and it is through continued education that I am able to keep abreast of the trends. One way I thought to reach these young people was through the Teen Alpha series, and so I started to plan.

I spoke with a chaplain at a local Christian secondary school to see if we could work together on this. Together, we planned, we prayed, and we studied the material. We spoke with the principal to make sure the school was on board before we announced the program and launched it. We expected low numbers. After all, in their minds,

the youth could have better things to do on their lunch hour.

A small group met once a week for lunch with the chaplain and we thought we would start with that group and build on it for our next presentation. Knowing one of the teachers at this school, I asked if I could speak to his class about Teen Alpha. He absolutely agreed and offered for me to speak to more than one class. I showed the Teen Alpha trailer, and spoke for about 10 minutes, using one of the questions from the first installment of the series. We then had a sign-up sheet that they could add their names to.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the Teen Alpha series, it is about 10 weeks long and builds as it progresses. You greet people as they come, serve a meal, get them settled, and show a video that is about 15 minutes long. During the video, three questions are asked which no one is to answer at that time. The video goes on to interview a few people with various answers to the question posed. This puts the attendees at ease, and they are more prone to participate during

the time following the video when we would break into small groups to discuss these questions.

In the case of Teen Alpha, the entire series was re-vamped and completed in October 2017, so it was very relevant while we were showing it in February 2018. As the series progresses, it delves deeper inwards for yourself and for your faith. A retreat takes place towards the end of the series. Although the retreat is normally done as a weekend, we opted for a day retreat.

I was overwhelmed with the response from the number of young people who had signed up—29 had signed up for the series. We had to adjust a few things—food (important when it comes to teens), seating, and enough adults to lead the break out groups after the video. We had 25 show up for the first presentation and consistently had 22 for the duration. Keeping the break-out groups the same each week allowed for a bond with the leader and with the youth. Being teens, they were not forthright in the beginning with answers or comments but you could see the comfort level grow with each passing week would pass.

By the time we had our retreat, the youth had bonded with each other and with the leaders. We asked, if we did

this again, would anyone like to help out and be youth leaders? Half the group wanted to be involved with the next one. Word of mouth has spread throughout the school and we have many asking about the series. It has also spread to two other high schools and we are planning for those to start in the new school year. Bear in mind, that these are Christian schools that are allowing us to present Alpha to teens.

Teen Alpha allows the youth to explore themselves, ask some deep questions, and search for the answers with their peers and, when asked, the leaders. We do not lead the question period. We allow the youth to discuss among themselves the meaning of the video, the implications on their lives, and where it all fits in with their faith. We are there to give them the safe space to be able to explore.

Looking over our past experience and looking forward to the upcoming year, one cannot but wonder at the great works being done. Those teens I spoke about at the beginning of this article—the ones searching for community—well, Teen Alpha is a building block of that community. Relationships are being built without a smart phone, and the youth are developing connections to their peers and with adults who spend time with them, believe in them, and give them hope.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)



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HAITI: Gender-based Violence

While women are known as the central pillars of the family and community in Haiti, they are also frequently vulnerable to sexual violence. Lack of resources, gender power imbalances and widespread poverty severely limit prevention, care and treatment for victims of abuse.

Through this Together We Can! project you can support Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) as they help vulnerable women and girls and put an end to gender-based violence in Haiti.

Violence against girls and women is a serious health and human rights issue.



Anamiewigummig also know as the Kenora Fellowship Centre

The Centre in Kenora, ON, provides a place of safety and a sacred space for healing and wellness. It serves a population who has been directly impacted by the effects of the Residential school system. These effects are manifested in poverty, addiction and often homelessness. The work of healing and reconciliation is sacred and brings many challenges and barriers, but also successes.

The Centre provides housing through the transition housing program. It offers basic essential services as food, shelter, showers, clothing, laundry, transportation, and various other supports.

Makes a great Christmas Gift!

Together We Can! projects are WMS campaigns.

For more information or to make a donation contact: Women's Missionary Society
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7 800-619-7301 skim@presbyterian.ca

Mission In Action

Blair Bertrand Malawi

A part of my role at Zomba Theological College is to mentor three doctoral students. These are my colleagues who have been selected to study at the University of Aberdeen. Those who have earned doctorates know how challenging it can be, even with the support of a residential community with quality academic resources like a library. These three students are attempting their doctorates without a community of other Ph.D. students around them and with inadequate academic resources.

My role is to encourage them and to basically serve as their residential academic community. As well, through the PCC, I can help provide academic resources. The PCC pays for some Internet use so that the students can access the library resources in Aberdeen. As well, we purchase books targeted by the students and their supervisors as especially important for their topics. It may not seem like much but some encouragement and support are helping these three students to succeed.

They also spend time at the University of Aberdeen. This partnership between the University of Aberdeen and Zomba Theological College in Malawi was created in 2016 and Ph.D. candidates, Rev.

Brian Theu, Rev. David Kawanga, and Rev. Thomas Nyang'ama, recently travelled to Old Aberdeen campus to take part in the Centre for the Ministry Studies Summer School Programme.

Rev. Dr. Ken Jeffrey says:

It has been great having Brian, David and Thomas here at Old Aberdeen as although being distance students they still benefit from being taught by our excellent staff and using our resources. It is good for them to have the opportunity to fully immerse themselves into the Aberdeen experience.

Previously, church leaders in Malawi who wanted to pursue postgraduate studies had to travel to other African nations or come to Europe or the USA to further their education. Our partnership with Zomba Theological College allows them to study for their Masters and Doctoral degrees in their own country. At the end of this period, we hope that the increased capacity in Zomba, provided by the staff who have gained their Ph.D.s from Aberdeen, will allow them to develop their own postgraduate programmes of study.

www.abdn.ac.uk/news/12215

Synodical

Central Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda Synodical held their Annual Meeting, hosted by Kingston Presbyterial, on April 20-21 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kingston. The theme was Forgiveness and Hope and the chosen scripture, Colossians 3:12-14 (NRSV)—

"Above all, clothe yourself with love" (v. 14a).

Our guest speaker, Senator Guy Mandeville C.D. presented us with the history of the First Nations and Inuit. He told a story of the use and meaning of various artifacts, including those

he brought with him. He told us that the First Nations use tobacco in their ceremonies and that they have a deep spiritual life and pray every day. He also defined various name places for us, for instance, Gananoque which means 'place of the singing rocks.'

Sarah Kim, Janet Brewer, and Joan Smith spoke on their *Healing and Reconciliation Journey* from June 12 to 21, 2017. They stopped in Winnipeg (Winnipeg Inner City Mission and Flora House) and Birdtail, MB; Kenora, ON; and Saskatoon, SK.

Sarah focused on *healing and*



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hope and gave a meditation on God's promised healing in Jeremiah 30:17 and 33:6. Healing implies there are wounds that need to be addressed and when we acknowledge our wounds, healing can be found. Healing is important and God wants all creation to be healed. As we looked at the pictures on her PowerPoint presentation, Sarah asked us to think about where we see healing and hope.

Janet gave a brief explanation of how the government opened the Residential Schools. The children had to forget about their language and culture. Janet spoke of their visit to Kenora Fellowship Centre (one of the *Together We Can!* projects the WMS is promoting). In Kenora, they also visited the last site of the Cecilia Jeffrey School.

They also participated in a community BBQ on Birdtail Sioux First Nation in Manitoba; visited Mistawasis First Nation Reserve in Saskatchewan, and met the Rev. Stewart Folster at Saskatoon Native Ministry. Everywhere they went, they were offered tobacco and sweet-grass.

Joan expressed that she eagerly wanted to experience being part of the Healing and Reconciliation tour.

(From the East Toronto
newsletter)

Alberta Women's Missionary Society Co-Presidents Sandi Church and Lisbeth Duncan and, Janet Brewer, President of the Women's

Missionary Society, brought greetings to some 140 individuals at the 75th Anniversary Celebration and Banquet of Camp Kannawin. WMS was responsible for starting the Presbyterian Church Camp Kannawin in 1943 and has been a part of the Camp ever since in various capacities.

Mavis Milne was the first camper at the first camp. She slept in the boathouse on straw picks, and since there was no water at the camp, she walked across two properties to a well for water. Both Rev. Brown Milne and Mavis were on the Camp Kannawin Board for over ten years.

Presbyterial

Montreal Presbyterial held its Annual Meeting on March 24 at the Chinese Presbyterian Church. The minister warmly welcomed us and led the worship service on Love for Others.

Linda Gerry constituted the meeting with prayer and welcomed the guest speaker, Mr. Paul Clarke, Director of Action Refugee of Montreal. He talked on how we should help people whether they come by boat or on foot, and spoke about their ongoing work to support refugees.

After a delicious lunch, we had our business meeting and roll call, and concluded with a hymn and a prayer. There were 42 people, including men, in attendance.

A second Presbyterial meeting was held on June 23 at Côte Des



Neiges Presbyterian Church. President Linda Gerry cordially welcomed us and led a devotion with the theme Free to Forgive. She also constituted the meeting.

We were honoured to have the three national representatives—President Janet Brewer, Treasurer Joan Smith, Executive Director Sarah Kim—with each of them highlighting their journey of Healing and Reconciliation with lots of informative items and lengthy discussions.

After a lavish lunch, we continued with singing and prayer.

We thank God for the encouraging participation of both meetings and the privilege to serve as equal members of the body of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Local

Queen Street East Presbyterian Church, Toronto:

It all began with a suggestion from Arlene de Graauw-Baillie, convenor of our WMS/Women's Association,

in mid-January. Arlene suggested we start a knitting group.

A short presentation was made to the congregation, outlining our vision to knit for the homeless in our community. We appealed to those who were knitters and crocheters, and then extended an invitation to teach those who wanted to participate but didn't know how to knit or crochet. We told the congregation that all they needed was a desire to help. All materials and lessons were to be supplied to the volunteers free of charge...and then we held our breath.

Six volunteers showed up for that first meeting on January 31. Several were complete beginners and some were experienced knitters who just needed a refresher on the basics. When we first began planning, we estimated we might have about 30 items for distribution by the winter of 2018/19. As of June 1, we had 80 items, including hats, scarves, socks, cowls, and balaclavas, with plans to add mittens next.

While the goal of the Knitting Group was to knit for others, we have also found this experience personally enriching thanks to the new friendships. Thanks to the ongoing support of Arlene, the WMS/ Women's Association, as well as the enthusiastic support from Boghos Barbouri, our minister. It is now a regular sight to see knitting needles and yarn magically appearing from knitting bags whenever any members of the Knitting Group are sitting together!

~Catherine Samalea

Varsity Acres, Calgary:

On Friday, September 7, at Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church, Calgary,

some 30 people gathered for a light lunch followed by a Thank Offering Service in support of the Women's Missionary Society. We were delighted that our National WMS President, Janet Brewer, was present to tell us of the work of the WMS nationally and internationally. She encouraged all women of the church and friends to consider attending the Regional Gathering in Surrey, BC, next March. Early bird registration is in November!

First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham:

WMS members at First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham, had something big to celebrate—one



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Remembering

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Leona Armstrong
Melville Presbyterian
WMS/Guild
Brussels ON

Wenda Berfelz
Bessie McMurchy
WMS,
Knox Presbyterian,
Listowel ON



Lois Hawton
St. Andrew's WMS
Mount Forest ON

Loris Logan (Henry)
Côte-des-Neiges WMS
Montreal QC

hundred years ago, the Women's Missionary Society of this church held their first meeting. Now amalgamated with Rockway and Kirk on the Hill in Fontheill, the WMS group is strong and stimulating.

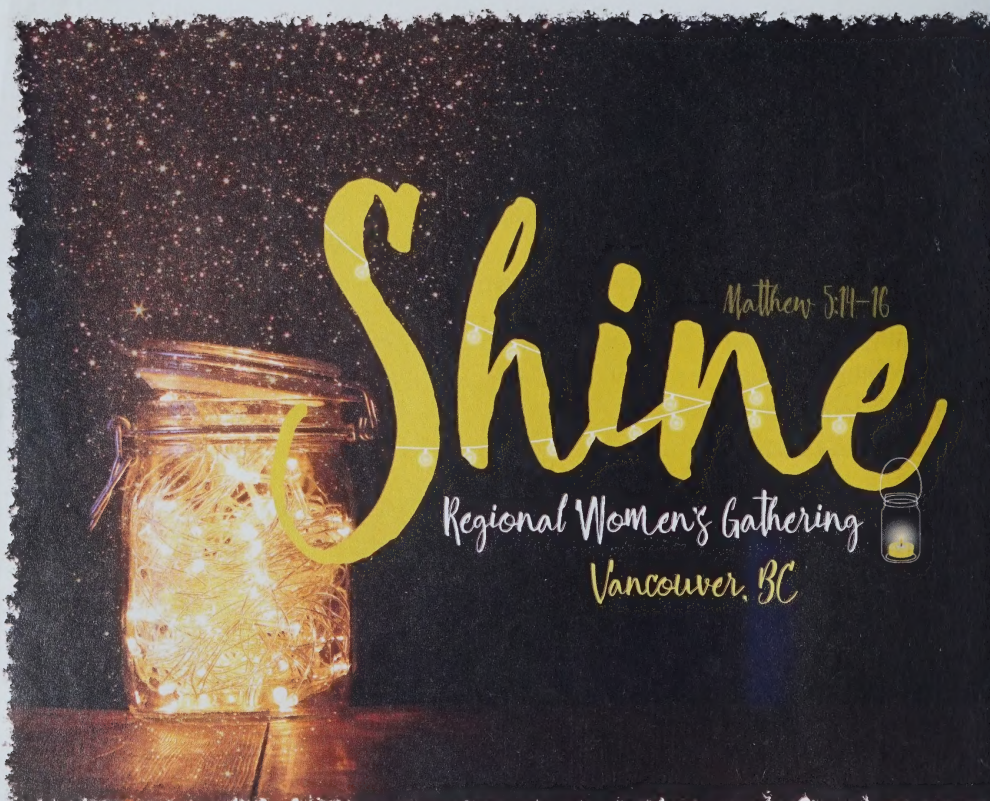
Niagara Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting at First Presbyterian Church on May 30. To honour the 100th Anniversary of the North Pelham group, those present were led down memory lane with a wonderful historic video slide show, prepared and presented by Margaret Rice and Nancy Miller. It concluded with a list of the local charities they support.

**Margaret Rice, President, and
Nancy Miller, Treasurer**



Rev. Sarah Kim, WMS Executive Director, Margaret Rice, President, and Debbie Kallender, Niagara Presbyterial President





Shine

Matthew 5:14-16

Regional Women's Gathering
Vancouver, BC



**Join us for the 2019 Regional Women's
Gathering in Vancouver, BC!**

DATE: March 29-30, 2019

**PLACE: Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel Surrey,
British Columbia**

REGISTRATION FEES:

\$225 before November 15, 2018

\$275 after November 15, 2018
and before February 15, 2019

INQUIRIES:

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